

CONCISE
HISTORY
OF
MODERN
WORLD

I



A HISTORY OF MODERN EUROPE

FROM 1815 TO THE PRESENT

ALBERT S. LINDEMANN

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

A History of Modern Europe

Concise History of the Modern World

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Preface

The Dilemmas and Rewards of a Concise Historical Overview

Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it.

(attributed to George Santayana)

We Communists have no difficulty in predicting the future – it's the past that keeps changing on us!

(anonymous)

Memory is like a crazy old woman, storing colored rags and throwing away good food.

(attributed to Austin O'Malley)

In the nineteenth century, Europeans produced a dazzling civilization, a culmination of centuries that was once termed “the rise of the west.” Europe influenced the rest of the world to an extent that few, if any, previous civilizations had. Europeans were admired and imitated but also feared and hated in much of the rest of that world. The empires of individual European countries, especially those of Britain and France, ruled over hundreds of millions of non-European peoples, often with a heavy hand. Europeans came to believe in their inherent superiority to other peoples, and there was no denying the Europeans’ scientific discoveries, military power, and all-round creativity. Yet, driven by the demons of the extreme left and right, European civilization nearly committed suicide, pulling much of the rest of the globe into two massive conflicts termed “world” wars, resulting in the deaths of tens of millions and incalculable miseries for millions more.

A familiarity with that history is obviously desirable for any educated person in the early twenty-first century, but such a familiarity is not easily gained. The volumes of Wiley-Blackwell’s Concise History of the Modern World series are designed for readers with “no prior knowledge” of the topics covered, but those volumes also have the goal of offering “vigorous interpretation” and insights from “the latest scholarship.” Any presentation of modern European history with those requirements must pay especially rigorous attention to priorities, leaving out much that would find a place in a longer volume for a different audience. In particular, any history intent on presenting penetrating analysis and provocative interpretive perspectives

must be substantially different from an inclusive, fact-filled, chronological narrative. At any rate, most modern historians have long since moved away from presenting “just the facts” in an “objective” way. Professional historians see their discipline as question-driven, involving debate and ambiguity, rather than simply one in which facts are accurately, amply, and objectively presented. Again, the professional historian’s approach to history involves priorities, unavoidably stirring up debate about the nature of those priorities.

The above three epigrams suggest many of the challenges – and pitfalls – associated with writing an overview that is readable and yet avoids condescension. The first quotation is the most widely familiar. Attributed to George Santayana, it is a simplification of his actual words (“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to fulfill it”); the following pages will have much to say about the “lessons of history” – lessons that have often turned out to be simplistic and misleading, if not utterly false, leading to new tragedies. The second quotation, while obviously tongue-in-cheek, makes a point about the past that is tacitly accepted by all historians – not that historical facts can be crudely ignored, as was notoriously the case under Communist rule, but rather that what interests us about the past subtly evolves. We are constantly discovering new details about the past, and partly because of that new information we continually reformulate the questions we ask about that past. This is not to assert that the past itself changes; it is rather to recognize that we look for new things, while losing interest in things that had once fascinated us.

The third of the above quotations observes how our memory tends to be attracted to the gaudy and garish, passing over “good food” – in other words, avoiding more valuable memories, especially if they are awkward ones. That quotation also touches on one of the major issues for those writing modern history: the widening gap between “popular” history and history written by professional historians, the first colorful and highly readable but also tending to be conceptually shallow, the second generally less readable but more intellectually challenging. That division has a convoluted relationship with what have been termed the “old” and “new” approaches to the writing of history. A venerable or “old” tradition in history-writing concerned itself primarily with the role of great men and with those areas in which such men predominated (politics, diplomacy, and warfare, but also scientific inquiry and economic enterprise, to name just a few). “New” history has its own honored tradition in its concern to “revise” or radically reconceptualize how we understand the past, to achieve fresh perspectives on it – and is especially proud in announcing its move away from the earlier focus on great men.

The distinction between old and new history is so fraught with definitional problems that the terms may pose more of an obstacle to understanding than an aid to it. Those writing from an “old” perspective are also constantly in search for new interpretations, while most of those writing “new” history by no means completely ignore the more long-standing concerns. Nonetheless, the terms “old history” and “new history” are entrenched and do have some thought-provoking implications. The difference between old and new history, for example, has been described as involving a shift “from victors’ history to victims’ history” – tendentiously, no doubt, but pointing nonetheless in fruitful directions. How much should historical narratives concentrate on “elites” (the powerful, the famous, the creative) in contrast to the mass of the population (the

previously neglected, powerless, mundane, and inarticulate)? Does the historian properly direct most attention to an ascendant Britain or to a declining Spain (in other words, to the successful model that others sought to emulate or to the failing one that others sought to avoid)? Which is it more important to understand: the personal lives of Hitler or Stalin, or the lives of the lower classes in Germany and Soviet Russia? Women constitute half of the population; should they then take up half of any general historical narrative? Elites are by definition a very small part of the population; should they then constitute a very small part of historical accounts? Anyone who believes that history should include “all of the above” cannot expect to find a concise volume that does so.

“New” history tends to favor “history from below,” dismissing “history from above” as limited and too focused on elites (which, at least for some observers, are implicitly bad, while “the people” are implicitly good). Impersonal forces are similarly seen as far more significant than the decisions of “great men”; the face of the common people, the writers of new history maintain, is more worthy of attention than previously recognized by those writing “old” history. These issues connect in a pertinent way with a major theme of the following pages; that is, how Europe over two centuries rose to such impressive heights, then fell to such appalling depths, yet then recovered to an amazing degree. Is that story best conceptualized “from above,” as one involving choice by identifiable historical actors and powerful elites (overwhelmingly males), who then are in some sense to be considered primarily responsible for the depths into which Europe descended? Or, in contrast, should the emphasis be from below, on great impersonal forces and the “anonymous” masses, relegating those elite actors to relative insignificance, like leaves on the surface of a powerfully rushing river?

Modern Europe’s civil war of 1914 to 1945, especially the mass murder of Jews that occurred in its last years, looms as the dark star of its history, potently drawing our attention and seeming to influence our interpretation of nearly all other developments. Who (or what) was responsible for the terrible catastrophes of those years? How could so many millions have perished? How could Germany, previously considered one of Europe’s most highly civilized areas, oversee a mechanized, merciless genocide of the Jews under its power, to say nothing of the many millions of other “inferior” peoples? How could Soviet Russia, its Communist leaders claiming to represent the humane values of the Enlightenment, oversee even more murderous measures over a longer period, resulting in tens of millions of deaths of its own citizens?

Are those calamities to be presented as avoidable, if political leaders or other elites had made different choices, or were those calamities ultimately inevitable, the result of impersonal forces that overwhelmed individuals? If we dismiss the “great men” of this period – Stalin, Hitler, Churchill – as unimportant compared to the workings of the economy or the strivings of the great masses of humanity, what kind of historical narrative might result? To turn the accusing finger in a different direction, might the rise in the power of the masses – ignorant, gullible, short-sighted – be seen as fundamental to Europe’s tragedies, whereas “great” men became important only insofar as they could manipulate those masses?

Such questions have no easy answers. This volume may be seen as an exploration of the kinds of blends or syntheses of old and new history that are desirable and – let us be realistic – possible in a concise volume. There is a related question that cannot be

ignored in a history of modern Europe. “Eurocentrism” is one of the many sins charged against “old” versions of history. A history of Europe is by definition centered on Europe, but what is more broadly implied in the charge of Eurocentrism is that historians of Europe (and, by extension, people of European descent) have seen the rest of the world from a blinkered perspective, failing to view non-Europeans with the proper sympathy or respect. For many, especially in the intellectual climate of recent years, sympathy and respect are absolute requirements when dealing with history’s victims – the weak, vulnerable, or previously denigrated. Similarly, any suggestion of a critical stance in regard to history’s “losers” is dismissed as mean-spirited.

There is, however, this dilemma: Some of those claiming to present “new” perspectives have reproduced the tendencies of “old” history in elevating *their* favored group, and, even more, in failing to evaluate it searchingly. But surely the goal of reassuring one group or another that their members are wonderful and their enemies nasty is not consistent with the highest ideal of historical analysis. In this, as in other regards, there are obvious connections with the culture wars of recent decades and the way one approaches history.

The word “sympathy” can imply many things, but it tends to pull in different directions than critical analysis does. The ideal in these pages has been to extend sympathy to all – while also subjecting all to searching analysis. It is an ultimately unachievable ideal, of course, but nonetheless sympathetic understanding must be distinguished from rationalization or apologetics. That many Europeans of the nineteenth century considered themselves superior to non-European peoples is only too obvious, just as European elites considered themselves superior to the European lower orders. European imperialism and the struggle against it are major themes of this volume, as are the related themes of European racism and the struggle against it. In the history of other areas of the world, imperialistic expansion and concepts roughly comparable to European racism were common enough, but European civilization came to have more concentrated power and a greater range of influence throughout the world than any previous civilization – and, of course, most of us have a fresher memory of it.

A key focus, then, of these pages is on the reasons for the admiration that Europeans attracted, as well as reasons for the related hatred they inspired. As noted above, the Europeans’ growing sense of superiority to the rest of the world was in certain regards based on reality. Their physical power as measured in weaponry in relation to that of non-Europeans was often overwhelming. Yet the fierce dynamism of European civilization helped to carry it to the edge of self-destruction. It grew to awe-inspiring power, characterized by unparalleled material wealth and military might. Its scientific discoveries impressed its most determined opponents, as did its music, visual art, and literature. European ideologies spread widely. But Europe descended, between 1914 and 1945, into shocking irrationality and cruelty, and the mass murder of its own peoples.

Most observers today reject the nineteenth-century belief, often termed “triumphalism,” that Europeans and those of European descent were bringing higher moral values and an obviously superior level of civilization to the rest of the world. In a now-famous put-down, the Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi, when asked about European civilization, observed that “it would be a nice idea.” Nonetheless, there

remains the issue of whether the contrasting assertion – that the West's influence on the rest of the world was mostly destructive – is any more valid. World history is after all a story of mutual influences, but not usually of mutual benevolence. Europe's arrogance and cruelty were hardly unprecedented, though its power and world influence may well have been.

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Acknowledgments

Writing a book can seem a lonely undertaking. Facing a blank screen each day (or worse, a screen filled with endlessly revised previous drafts), one mutters, “How did I get into this?” In my case there is a simple answer: I was asked by Christopher Wheeler, publisher at Wiley Blackwell, if he could interest me in writing a concise, readable history of modern Europe. In no small part due to his delicate flattery, my initial resistance was overcome. (A more complex answer is that, having taught the subject for many years, I had long contemplated writing such a book, and this was the chance to put up or shut up.)

It was not lonely, then, at the beginning. Christopher and I exchanged many emails, discovering that we were largely in agreement about the dimensions of the volume. About six months later I delivered a detailed proposal. Five scholarly readers were then asked to offer their reactions to it. These turned out to be gratifyingly supportive. Thereafter, many more readers were asked to look over the gradually emerging draft chapters. Among those readers were students in my university classes, colleagues at my university and elsewhere, non-academic friends, and last but by no means least my wife, Barbara, also a professor of History – the first and last reader of all my books and articles.

A contract was negotiated, but not long thereafter Christopher accepted a position at Oxford University Press. His successor at Wiley Blackwell, Tessa Harvey, proved gracious and professional, even when progress seemed worryingly slow. I again exchanged countless emails with Tessa, Isobel Bainton, Anna Mendell, and Gillian Kane. It would be hard to imagine a more efficient, sensitive, and supportive group of editors.

The complete draft of the manuscript in its initial form was too long, so I thoroughly revised it, deleting tens of thousands of words that I had so sweated to produce, but I finally got much closer to the agreed-upon goal of a “concise” history. This draft yet again went through a rigorous vetting process, most notably by development editor Sarah Wrightman, whose sensitivity to what I was trying to accomplish gave me a welcome boost. The eagle eye of copy-editor Hazel Harris caught typos and inconsistencies, but more significantly she showed a remarkable talent for flagging unclear passages. Caroline Hensman and Charlotte Frost offered invaluable assistance with the often complex issues associated with selecting maps and illustrations.

Rather than feeling lonely, then, I had good reason to agree heartily that it “takes a village” to (raise a child or) write a book of this sort. Yet, with all these many helping hands, there did remain an undeniable solitude, for an author must be, in the immortal words of a recent American president, “the decider.” Many readers offered knowledgeable suggestions, but those suggestions often contradicted the equally knowledgeable suggestions of other readers. Not all readers could come fully to grips with the implications of that terrifying word “concise.” While it is true, then, that it takes a village, it is also the case that “too many cooks spoil the broth.” A single author’s voice is crucial to producing a readable and coherent narrative, and that author cannot avoid making decisions about what should be included, or, more painfully, what had to be excluded. Such a process, even for the most confident and experienced writer, will likely involve bouts of frustration and self-doubt – if finally also a giddy mix of satisfaction and exhaustion at wrestling the thing to the ground.

It is customary in the acknowledgments page to end by thanking everyone who helped yet at the same time firmly recognizing that any remaining errors or inadequacies are the author’s responsibility. I hope my comments above adequately convey those sentiments. But I must sincerely declare to all those mentioned above – beyond the usual boilerplate and blarney – that it would have been inconceivable to complete it without you, and I offer you my sincerest thanks.

Introduction

What Is Europe?

As will be more amply explored in the concluding chapter (Chapter 27), by the early years of the twenty-first century, the long-standing question “What is Europe?” – or, more generally, “What does it mean to be a European?” – took on mounting interest and complexity, for both Europeans and others. That interest derived in part from the progress made toward European unification after World War II, linked to the related discredit of the nationalistic passions associated with the rise of modern nation-states. Interest also arose because of the dilemmas that growing European unity seem to pose. With the Cold War passing ever more into remote memory, Europeans were asking, not for the first time but now with more direct and practical implications, what distinguished them from the citizens of the United States, a nation founded by Europeans on European principles that was coming to play a crucial role in European history in the twentieth century yet was somehow different from Europe.

The citizens of the United States have long considered their country to be a model for the world, a view dismissed as a naive conceit in most of the rest of the world, though taken seriously, at least to some degree, by others. Still, especially during the presidency of George W. Bush, the American model (or what in the United States was often termed “American exceptionalism”) was one that made even previously sympathetic Europeans uncomfortable. One conveniently succinct answer to “What is European?” was simply “*not* American!” (“Americans” will be used in these pages for “citizens of the United States of America,” partly because it is more succinct but mostly because the usage is so widely accepted in the world, even if it understandably irritates some Latin Americans.)

Identity is often more easily sensed by what one is *not* than what one is. That negative reaction to the American model, whatever its nuances and ups and downs, is revealing because there has been little need for Europeans to state so emphatically their differences from, say, the Japanese, the Chinese, or Africans, since the differences of those peoples from Europeans are so obvious. In previous centuries “not Asian” might have

been an equally succinct and satisfying answer (“Asia” and “the Orient” then vaguely referring to areas east or southeast of Europe). But Europeans after the end of the Cold War felt a refreshed but hardly unprecedented need to examine and underline what it was that distinguished them from Americans.

“Christendom” and Europe

The actual word, Europe, has a long history, stretching back to ancient times, involving a subtle and complex symbolism. “Christendom” was a more common expression from the early Middle Ages up to the seventeenth century, but, as the eighteenth century progressed, “Europe” gradually replaced “Christendom.” The earlier term was found unsatisfactory for several reasons, probably most important being the disgust felt by influential European elites for the catastrophic wars of religion in the seventeenth century. That sentiment blended with their growing admiration for the tolerant and sophisticated values of the pre-Christian civilizations of Greece and Rome. Those intellectual elites differed about which qualities were most characteristically European, but they nonetheless felt a growing sense of common identity, by the eighteenth century, that extended beyond Christian faith.

Among the most important aspects of that common identity was the Europeans’ sense that they enjoyed “liberties” that non-European civilizations did not. In a related way, Europeans took growing pride in the rich variety and relatively free interplay of the many cultures and languages within their states, with no single language or culture imposed from a ruling elite (though French came close for a while). Even the term “Christian,” in spite of the ill-repute the term took on for some European intellectual elites, had lasting relevance in the emerging sense of shared European values, in that European civilization in the previous thousand years had unquestionably been Christian. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Europeans remained devoutly or at least formally Christian well into the twentieth century. Even those Europeans who expressed disillusionment with Christianity nonetheless retained an identification with the art and music of the past, both overwhelmingly Christian in themes and inspiration.

This sense of European cultural commonality in comparison to the rest of the world was by the early nineteenth century a subtle and yet significant force in binding Europeans together. Again, what was *not* European was easiest to state succinctly. The Turks, to cite a particularly revealing example, were not considered European. True, their empire extended into part of the European landmass, and for many years European peoples were subjected to their rule. Istanbul, the Turks’ capital city, is as close to Rome as Warsaw is. Moreover, the Turks’ capital city was once called Constantinople, a Christian capital rivaling Rome. The Turkish example is further revealing in that the peoples of Asia Minor, the Turkish heartland, resemble Europeans physically (or “racially”); even further, the Anatolian Peninsula (another word for Asia Minor) protrudes into Europe and is surrounded by European bodies of water (the Mediterranean Sea to its south and the Black Sea to its north). Still, the Turks were not considered Europeans because they lived under an “Oriental” despotism, in Asia Minor (the term itself of course marked a difference from Europe), and did not enjoy European liberties.

The lack of liberty was not the only issue, however. The Russians also lived under despotism but were by the eighteenth century making more persuasive claims to be considered Europeans than the Turks could make. A more crucial issue was that the Turks were Muslim, and for much of the early modern period of Christendom they had been the Enemy. Fighting off the Turkish–Muslim military threat in early modern times had contributed significantly to Europe’s sense of itself as a whole with common interests to defend, just as, in the nineteenth century, the steady weakening of the Turkish Empire was a key element in the Europeans’ growing sense of superiority, as the Habsburg and Russian empires nibbled away at Turkish holdings in the Balkans.

Finally, the Turks’ origins, in the prehistoric movements of peoples, were believed to differ from those of the great majority of Europeans, as was further confirmed by the nature of the Turkish language. Most European tongues derive from the Indo-European family of languages (“Aryan” was a term often preferred then), whereas the Turks spoke a language that belonged to the Altaic family of “Asian” languages. Still, even this was not decisive but rather one element of a cumulative sense of Turkish difference. There were some Europeans, notable among them the Hungarians and the Finns, whose origins and language were also non-Aryan.

Geographical Definitions

A definition of Europe based on its geographical features was easier to formulate than a religious, cultural, or linguistic one. Nonetheless, Europe’s “natural” boundaries had a number of awkward or contestable aspects, beginning with the just-mentioned point, in the southeast, where the Anatolian and Balkan peninsulas meet. Similarly, on Europe’s northeastern edge, Russia’s status as fully European long remained in question. Perhaps more precisely the issue was which *part* of the Russian Empire was European and which was not, since that vast empire stretched into areas that were incontestably not European.

The lands dominated by the tsars by the late eighteenth century extended from east-central Europe (where a large portion of Poland had recently been annexed into the Russian Empire) across the Ural Mountains into the sprawling territories of Siberia. The generally accepted notion of “European Russia” referred to the area west of the Ural Mountains. Southward from those mountains, the empire of the tsars also extended into central Asia, including many Turkic peoples and millions of Muslims. Tsarist rule itself, even in European Russia, remained indelibly marked by Russia’s past of despotic Tartar domination (the Tartars were one of many Turkic-speaking peoples originating in Mongolia). However, the Slavic-speaking Russians had converted to Christianity, even if many of the Russian Empire’s other nationalities had not.

A key consideration was that the tsarist empire had come, by the eighteenth century, to play a key role in European power politics and its related dynastic alliances. In fact, the tsars themselves by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were more Germanic than Slavic in lineage. Comparable marriages between Christian and Muslim dynasties were scarcely conceivable, although military alliances between the Turks and Christian states did occasionally occur. Russian armies, allied with various European powers, marched over much of western and central Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth



Map I.1 Physical map of Europe.

centuries. That was shocking enough for many Europeans, but for Turkish or Muslim armies to have done the same would have been an almost unthinkable repellent notion.

An entirely different kind of ambiguity about Europe's natural or physical boundaries prevailed at Europe's northwestern edge. The inhabitants of the British Isles retained a subtle if sometimes adamant sense of separateness from the Continent; they did not actually consider themselves non-European, but they cherished an identity as physically, culturally, and diplomatically separate from the Continental states. Just as the Russians had major interests in the non-European east, the British looked out over the oceans, beyond Europe, to their vast imperial holdings. Still, British cultural distance from other Europeans remained minor compared to that of the Russians. British "liberties" were admired by many on the Continent, in sharp contrast to the revulsion generally felt for the harshly despotic rule of the tsars. Furthermore, European civilization was so profoundly influenced by its long-standing British element that describing the British as non-European makes little sense.

Whatever the uncertain aspects of Europe's eastern and western fringes, by 1815 its general boundaries were evident enough to contemporaries: the Mediterranean Sea on the south, the Atlantic Ocean on the west, Scandinavia (or its sparsely settled Arctic regions) on the north, the Ural Mountains to the northeast, and the Black and Caspian seas to the southeast, with a further boundary of the Caucasus Mountains stretching between them. Within these broad, palpable geographic boundaries there was an intricate network of internal barriers and byways – seas, rivers, mountains, swamps, and plains – that established some of the preconditions provided by nature for nation-building and national identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The celebrated nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke (birth and death dates of figures discussed in the text are to be found in the index) argued that Europe's unique greatness and creativity were explained by the fact that it was composed of many nations, within various and often imperfect natural frontiers, in enduringly productive interplay with one another; they were not a single political unit or centrally directed empire, yet they were able repeatedly to unite sufficiently to repel intrusion from non-European powers. Europe's many states were never, or at least not for long, completely dominated by one of their own states; they remained enduringly separate yet still part of a larger identifiable civilization.

The significance of what nature provided Europe with is worth further scrutiny, as is the point that the internal natural borders of Europe's nation-states were often highly uncertain – one reason among many that Europe's leaders were endlessly tempted to try to add a neighbor's territory to their own. Nature provided Italy ("the boot") with unusually well-defined borders, but Poland's were anything but clear; they were mostly drawn in the plains and swamps on the east and west, and were not even beyond dispute along the Baltic Sea to the north. Poland's geographic situation made it likely, especially given its powerful, expansionist neighbors, Russia and Prussia, that its history as a nation would be insecure. And in fact Poland's recurring national tragedies were a central theme of modern European history, with far-flung implications.

The natural frontiers of France ("the hexagon"), considered by many to be the model modern nation-state, were obvious at the Atlantic, Pyrenees, and Alps but still ambiguous enough along its northeast to be a source of repeated conflict. The Rhine river was an invitingly "natural" border for France, but it was not acceptable as such to most of

the people of Germanic identity who lived along the Rhine's western bank. The remains of millions of soldiers now lie beneath the soil of France's perennially contested northern frontier, the result of a series of historic battles in modern times (and in years before), among the most famous of them Waterloo (1815), Verdun (1916), and the Battle of the Bulge (1944–5).

The British Isles seem favored by nature in much the same way as Italy, since they are separated from the Continent by seas. But Ireland, also separated by water, was a source of constant friction and bloodshed in British history. Even Italy, in spite of its seemingly well-defined northern border along the Alps, would face enduring conflicts along the northern alpine stretches of the Adige river, or Alto (upper) Adige (running just north of the Po river), where Austro-Germans and Italians had mixed extensively over the centuries. Along the Mediterranean coast, where French and Italian territories mingled and national identities were uncertain, relatively minor clashes and territorial exchanges marked the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In those areas, as elsewhere, seemingly insoluble conflicts arose as modern nations were being hammered into shape: Natural frontiers and the historical distribution of languages, religions, or economic interests often did not match – which might be termed one of several portentous flaws in the notion of modern Europe as properly composed of sovereign nation-states (as distinguished from states formed on dynastic or other principles).

The southern edge of Europe, along the Mediterranean Sea, constitutes an obvious boundary, a barrier but also a byway. The north African coast, while not considered part of Europe, comes within eight miles of it at the Straits of Gibraltar in southern Spain, and within a hundred miles of it along much of what was known historically as the Maghreb (“west” in Arabic); that is, from the Straits eastward to the northern tip of Tunisia. From Roman times, the entire north African coast had enjoyed regular, sometimes intimate, contacts with Europe. In the nineteenth century, Algeria was settled extensively by Europeans, a source of tension and finally war in the following century (Chapter 24).

Europe's Unusual Seas: The Mediterranean and Baltic

The Mediterranean is a remarkable inner sea; there is nothing quite like it anywhere else on the globe. It is relatively calm and navigable most of the year, with many miles of shoreline, countless harbors, and easy access to rivers, and with yet further access to the Black Sea and eastern Europe through the Dardanelles. On Europe's north, the Baltic Sea constitutes a roughly comparable maritime barrier and byway. It is smaller, colder, and less calm and inviting, but it still has served as an invaluable corridor for both trade and conquest, connecting to an extensive network of broad, navigable rivers, many of them reaching hundreds of miles inland. Even in the west, the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, for all the fury of their winter storms, facilitated travel and communication along the borders of Europe's western peoples.

The peculiar physical nature of Europe, with these two large inner seas, numerous islands, peninsulas, natural harbors, and navigable rivers, has prompted speculations that Europe's unique geography, natural resources, and climate had much to do with the cultural and scientific advances of its peoples over the last several thousand years and,

finally, with its spectacular rise in the last several centuries. Theories of geographical determinism are out of fashion today, but there seems little question that, compared to other areas of similar size, modern Europe has benefited from a number of natural features. More precisely, it seems reasonable to conclude that European industrialization would have been impossible, or at least far slower in its progress, had Europe not enjoyed the advantages of temperate climate, much fertile soil (and no desert), significant mineral deposits (particularly coal and iron), many navigable rivers, thousands of miles of coastline, and countless natural harbors. The precise role of geographical features is not easily conceptualized and must be integrated into other factors, such as stages of historical and intellectual-cultural development. Underground coal reserves are of little use to stone-age peoples, as indeed uranium deposits would have had no meaning for early nineteenth-century entrepreneurs. But, in Europe's case, the stages of intellectual-cultural preparation and geography came together in particularly productive ways in the last several centuries.

Europe's Unusual Races

It is even less fashionable to speak of the role of race in Europe's rise, although Europeans were doing so confidently by the last decades of the nineteenth century. Outdated and obviously untenable theories of racial determinism aside, it is nonetheless useful to gain some sense of how Europeans viewed themselves literally, and how their understanding of race (physical appearance; height; the color of skin, hair, eyes), linked to language and culture, might be termed another aspect of Europe's unique natural "scenery." Europeans in fact did look physically different from the peoples of most of the rest of the world and were keenly aware of that difference, as were many of the non-European peoples with whom they made contact. The Europeans' more abundant facial and body hair, often blond or red, caused some Chinese observers to wonder whether they were the product of sexual union between humans and canines.

Within Europe, too, there were physical differences that Europeans believed had cultural or intellectual implications. The peoples of the southern regions of Italy, Spain, and Greece were generally darker in the color of their hair, eyes, and skin, as well as shorter than those in the northern European regions. Light-colored hair, blue or green eyes, and lighter skin color were more commonly found in the north, and were rare across the rest of the planet. The peoples of northern Europe were believed to be calmer and more phlegmatic, if also more warlike. Most Europeans considered themselves members of what generally came to be termed the white race, although they used many other terms to suggest a wide range of nuances and gradations within white (Aryan, Nordic, Caucasian, and Anglo-Saxon were some of the most common).

Ranke's contemporary, the French scholar Ernest Renan, whose books were widely read in the nineteenth century, wrote that France's courageous and combative Frankish race had been much weakened by its mixing over the centuries with the garrulous and effete Celtic racial strain. That interbreeding, he believed, was an important explanation for the defeat of the French by the more warlike and racially pure Germans in 1870–1. Such reasoning from what are believed to be racial traits connected with premodern generalizations about Europe's peoples and spread to the general population in the

course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Claims of racial superiority came most commonly from northern Europeans, and were especially invidious in regard to non-Europeans, but they were often applied by northerners to southern and eastern-Europeans as well.

European Languages

The palpable differences in the physical traits of Europeans from north to south had counterparts or overlaps in language and culture. Germanic languages (Danish, German, Norwegian, Swedish) were spoken in the north; Latin languages (French, Italian, Romanian, Spanish) in the south; Slavic languages (Czech, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Ukrainian) in the east; and Celtic languages (Breton, Gaelic, Irish, Welsh) on the northwestern fringes of the British Isles and the extreme west of France (Brittany). By the standards of modern linguistics, the definition in the early nineteenth century of what constitutes a “real” language was wholly inadequate; some forms of European speech that were initially dismissed as mere local dialects or peasant jargons (Slovak, Ukrainian, Yiddish) only gradually gained recognition as genuine modern languages. There were, as well, many relatively recent blends of the three main general categories (English is Germanic with Latin elements; Romanian mixes Latin and Slavic; Yiddish is Germanic with Hebrew and Slavic elements). A variety of alphabets were used, too; what is today termed Roman script prevailed in most of western Europe, with minor differences, whereas Cyrillic alphabets, with significantly larger variations in the letters used, prevailed in the Slavic areas of the east, with the exceptions of Polish and Czech, which were written in Roman script. Serbo-Croatian was written in both Cyrillic and Roman. Yiddish used Hebrew characters, with slight modifications, and was read from right to left, as is the case with Hebrew.

European religions, too, had distinct regional distributions and connotations. Protestantism predominated in the Germanic northwest, Catholicism in the Latin south, and Greek or Russian Orthodoxy in the Slavic east (with a major enclave of Catholics in Poland). There were regions, especially in east-central Europe, where different races, languages, and religions were thoroughly mixed and individual identities sometimes multiple. There were a few areas where races and languages were found that did not correspond to any of the above general categories. The Basques of northwestern Spain are one of the most notable examples; they are a remnant population, most strongly represented in remote mountainous areas, of the residents before the Indo-European invasions several thousand years earlier. The physical appearance of Basques is white, but their language has no relation to other European languages, and their blood types are revealingly different from those of the surrounding populations. The Basques were a perennial thorn in the side of those trying to centralize the rule of Spain.

Equally separate from the Indo-Europeans but more numerous than the Basques were the Magyars of east-central Europe, related in distant origin and language to the Finns and the Estonians. There were other even more “exceptional” or “outsider” peoples, notably the Gypsies and the Jews, who were considered non-European in origin but also non-European in nature, even though they had resided in Europe for centuries. They themselves recognized their non-European origins – indeed traditionally considered that

origin part of an identity of which they were proud. They spoke separate languages, practiced separate religions, maintained separate cultures and dress, and looked physically different. Whether they might eventually be integrated into modern European civilization or somehow blend into one or another of Europe's peoples became a major issue in the nineteenth century, especially in the case of the Jews, who were more numerous than the Gypsies and blended into surrounding cultures more amply.

Europe's Religious Mixes

By 1815, European civilization was still almost universally considered to be Christian in nature; over 95 per cent of the population was formally Christian or Christian in origin (closer to 99 per cent in western Europe). The concept of a "Judeo-Christian" civilization, recognizing the contribution of the Jews and Judaism to European civilization, would come to prominence only much later: The term at any rate originated in twentieth-century America rather than in early nineteenth-century Europe. Jews constituted around 1 per cent of Europe's total population in 1815, but they were unevenly distributed and often bitterly divided among themselves. A heavy majority of them lived in the European part of the Russian Empire and the adjoining northeastern part of the Habsburg Empire. Relatively small numbers lived in western Europe, mostly in isolated pockets. Most Christians in the area of thinnest Jewish concentration, from southern Italy and Spain up through western France, Britain, and Scandinavia, had little if any direct contact with Jews. Nonetheless, by the early twentieth century, the striking prominence of Jewish names in European intellectual, artistic, and economic life (Mendelssohn, Marx, Heine, the Rothschilds, Freud, Mahler, Einstein) suggests just how much Jews had risen to public visibility and importance in European life. That those listed were German-speaking Jews is also revealing.

Areas of mixed Christian denominations were to be found in most countries. The nature of the mixes was often of longstanding historical importance. There was a Protestant minority of about 1 per cent in France, with more than sectarian significance, in that French Protestants prospered under modern economic conditions more than French Catholics. Such was the case to an even more pronounced degree with French Jews (about one-tenth the number of French Protestants). French Protestants and Jews tended in the course of the nineteenth century to rise socially and economically, as well as to cluster on the political left, whereas those who retained their Catholic faith in France were more likely to be those on the right, and especially peasants and others remaining in traditional occupations in small towns and villages. They were more likely to remain unchanged in economic status, or even to decline.

In Britain, it was the Catholics who were a minority, one that felt itself beleaguered and one that generally did not rise socially and economically. In Ireland, in contrast, Catholics were the heavy majority, except in the Protestant area of Belfast in the north; relations between the two denominations remained extremely hostile. Hungary was mostly Catholic but had a significant Protestant minority, and by the end of the nineteenth century about a quarter of the population of the Hungarian capital city, Budapest, was Jewish. Jews made up an even larger proportion of the wealthier, upwardly mobile classes in Hungary than in France or Germany. Ethnic Poles were

overwhelmingly Catholic and particularly fervent in their faith (though, again, close to a quarter of their capital city, Warsaw, was Jewish, and in both Budapest and Warsaw Jews prospered far more than ethnic Magyars or Poles). Ukrainians, situated between Poland and Russia, were mostly Greek Orthodox (and peasant); the Jewish population of Ukrainian areas was around 10 percent of the total. Catholic Spain had few religious minorities (its Jews had been expelled in 1492), even in its capital city, but it did have a small Gypsy population.

It should be understood that such terms as British, French, German, and Russian were less precise in 1815 than they would become by the late nineteenth century, although they retained more ambiguity and internal variety than nationalist enthusiasts or official statistics often suggested. Nineteenth-century European nationalism strived to blend birthplace, race, language, religion, culture, and historical memory, constructing what scholars have come to term the “imagined communities” of Europe’s modern nation-states. Such an imagined or constructed nationalism undoubtedly worked as a force for integration and reconciliation of various previously isolated or hostile groups within the boundaries of nation-states, but it simultaneously tended to fuel tension – and justify warfare – between nations.

Some national groups considered a given religious faith to be an essential part of their national identity (such as Catholicism for the Poles, Irish, and Spanish), leaving religious and ethnic minorities in an awkward position. In Poland, for example, it was by no means generally accepted by the Catholic majority that the numerous German Protestants, Ukrainian Orthodox, and Jews residing in Poland could become “real” Poles (nor did many of them *want* to become Poles). For such reasons, modern nationalism, with its pressures to conform and its anxiety about the threats from other nations, not infrequently also worked to aggravate internal tensions, as in the infamous *Kulturkampf* (culture struggle) that pitted the German (and Protestant) Chancellor, Bismarck, against Germany’s numerous Catholics, and in the virulent French nationalist hostility to Jews that erupted in the Dreyfus Affair. At any rate, few nations could in truth claim to be anything like pure in race (whatever the slippery word “race” might have meant to them) or unified in language, religion, and culture. To repeat, modern European history can be described as one long, indecisive struggle, filled with triumphs and tragedies, over the tangled issues that arose in regard to national integration and seemingly incompatible identities.

The Differing Rates of Growth in Europe’s Regions

Just as Europeans in the nineteenth century tended to rise in power in relation to the non-European world, so each of the above European groups and areas experienced significantly different rates of growth in population and material prosperity. Rapid growth had generally favorable implications for a nation’s power and security, just as slow growth usually had unfavorable ones. In terms of industrialization and modernization more generally, northwestern Europe did far better than Europe’s southeast. Protestant areas did better than Catholic, but Catholic-majority areas generally fared better than those of Greek Orthodox concentration. Germanic areas did better than Latin, but Latin areas better than Slavic.

The disparities of national success were a key aspect of Europe's restless dynamism, as well as a root cause of its anxieties and tragedies. Those left behind, or fearing that they soon would be, tended to fashion litanies of grievances into their national identities. Even the relatively successful populations were prone to stances of aggrieved belligerence, especially if they were not granted the respect they believed they deserved. Most significantly in that regard, Germany's rise in the second half of the nineteenth century revealed unresolved dilemmas in the identity of its citizens that in retrospect historians have viewed as especially ominous. Much of the history of modern Europe has been crucially affected by Germany's impressive yet deeply flawed ascent. Europe's Jews – and especially German Jews – also rose in striking ways; they too edged toward tragedy, seemingly as part of the cruelly paradoxical price of the many successes they enjoyed, since those successes proved threatening to a significant part of Europe's population, especially in the crisis-ridden years of the first half of the twentieth century.

Ranke believed that the dynamic interplay of Europe's Germanic and Latin elements, back into antiquity, was fundamental to European identity. But, by the end of the nineteenth century, if not before, the rising significance of the Slavs in the European amalgam had become undeniable; Dostoevsky, Kandinsky, Mendeleev, Tchaikovsky, Tolstoy, and many other Slavic figures became universally recognized as shining lights of European civilization. The Magyars and the Finns also became recognized as unquestionably European in their high culture and creativity. In the ranks of virtually every major nationality, Jews experienced not only dazzling economic success but also an even more remarkable rise to intellectual and artistic prominence. It was especially striking how these outsiders and pariahs of centuries past came to compose so much of the literature or music that French, Germans, or Magyars thought of as capturing their own unique national genius. Also noteworthy was the extent to which national "cross-overs" came to be not only considered acceptable but also embraced as icons: Victor Hugo and Émile Zola, the great French novelists, were of Italian origin; Heinrich Treitschke, the celebrated German ultra-nationalist historian, had Slavic forebears; Camilo di Cavour and Giuseppe Garibaldi, heroes of Italian national unification, spoke French better than Italian.

Different rates of prosperity in the nineteenth century spurred migration, both within countries (mostly to their more prosperous industrializing urban areas) and from country to country, but also out of Europe entirely, to the New World. The workings of that pressure valve also contributed much to Europe's relatively successful adjustment to modernization. It would have been even more troubled if those masses of people had remained in the countries where they had been born. Europe as a whole experienced an extraordinary population explosion in the nineteenth century. Most of its countries, even the most prosperous, had difficulty in absorbing the new populations, but, as a general rule, areas or countries that were slow or late to industrialize experienced the greatest emigration to the Americas. Such was the case especially with eastern and southern Europe in the three or four decades before 1914.

Looking at Europe as a whole over the two centuries covered in this volume, massive internal shifts in populations occurred, with far-reaching implications for Europe's ever-evolving identity. The restless movement of populations in search of work and better living conditions was only part of the story. In the twentieth century, millions were forcibly driven from their homelands, mostly in times of war, by what later became

known as ethnic cleansing. By the end of the twentieth century, many of the mixed ethnic and religious areas of 1815 had been homogenized, the historical pockets and enclaves of various minorities largely obliterated. In that sense, the long-standing ethnic and religious problems were solved – at a ghastly price, but presumably promising less ethnic strife in the future.

However, the movement of millions of non-Europeans and non-Christians into Europe in the period after World War II presented a bewildering range of new religious and ethnic problems. A central issue became whether these racially, ethnically, and religiously different non-European peoples could somehow embrace a viable European identity and be accepted by the long-resident populations.

Quite aside from the material wealth and relative tolerance of European society, the charm and beauty of this civilization and the economic productivity and creativity of its people have endured in spite of the horrors of the twentieth century. No reputable history could seek to glide over those horrors – this one certainly does not – but Europe's beauty, natural and human-made, also deserves recognition, as does the resilience of its people.

Notes to the Reader

The dates supplied for the volumes discussed in the Further Reading sections generally refer to the most recent publication; no effort has been made to cover the complex publication histories of many of these volumes.

Similarly, in the main text it is often the case that establishing the exact wording (or even the actual author) of famous quotations can be a problem (as in quoting Santayana at the beginning of the Preface). For the most part, it is unrealistic, in a concise overview, to delve into the issues involved. Statistics, too, are often uncertain or contested, perhaps most famously for the Holocaust and for the deaths for the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1945, but, again, exploring the often arcane aspects of calculating deaths from disease, civilian bombing, or concentration camps cannot be realistically worked into a concise narrative. The quotations and statistics provided in these chapters have been checked electronically and are the most widely accepted ones. They are also usually accompanied by wording that suggests the difficulties of being certain about their validity.

A Few Words about the Further Reading Sections

Clarity and good writing are among the most important qualifications for the books included in the Further Reading sections for each chapter. An effort has been made to include a sampling of important scholarly studies but also a few of the best-selling popular works – at least, those that have received at minimum a qualified recognition from professional historians. Thus, rather than simply offering an alphabetical list, brief comments are included to indicate the nature of the diverse books mentioned.

The historians of modern Europe, including those in other countries who have made major contributions to our understanding of Europe, have been more numerous and influential than those of any comparable area or period. The books in the Further

Reading sections may be considered the gems of a remarkably rich field, but many of these books can also be considered realistic next steps for readers who want to learn more about the matters covered in each chapter but who are not yet prepared to tackle the more lengthy or demanding scholarly works. Still, a few hefty tomes are included, and identified as such, in these selections.

Given the thousands of marvelous books in English on the history of modern Europe, any rigorously concise selection must appear inadequate and to some degree arbitrary, unavoidably leaving out many others equal in merit. Most of the volumes listed in these Further Reading sections have extensive recommendations for further reading, and also cover more amply some of the most controversial issues.

National and Thematic Overviews

Only rarely is it possible to find a single book that covers exactly the areas dealt with in each chapter. Moreover, the themes of the chapters intermingle in intricate ways, and thus the books listed in each section are sometimes repeated. Many of the recommended books are themselves general histories, far more extensive in coverage than this one but still works of synthesis and overview rather than finely focused scholarly monographs. They are usually the most distinguished and readable histories of individual nations, or histories devoted to a particular theme (political, economic, diplomatic, etc.).

Gordon Wright's *France in Modern Times* (5th ed. 1995) stands out as a model of scholarly but gracefully written synthesis – balanced and concise, yet penetrating in analyses. His chapters on “varieties of history” are especially useful as guides to further reading in modern French history (at least up to the 1990s).

The two volumes devoted to modern Germany in the Oxford History of Modern Europe series also stand out as both scholarly and gracefully written: James J. Sheehan's *German History, 1770–1866* (1989) and Gordon Craig's *Germany, 1866–1945* (1978). Mary Fulbrook ably carries the German story into the early twenty-first century in *A History of Germany: The Divided Nation 1918–2008* (2008).

The history of Russia and the Soviet Union is a rich and sprawling field, no less contentious than that of Germany. The books by Harvard professor Richard Pipes are hard to beat for interpretive panache and readability, though his perspective on Russian history is notably right-wing, far more so than the perspectives of nearly all of his own many students (c. eighty PhDs). Among Pipes's numerous publications, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (1974) and *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (1993) cover much of the modern period. Peter Kenez, one of Pipes's students, is the author of a succinct and engagingly written overview of the Soviet period, *A History of the Soviet Union from Beginning to End* (2006). It is notably different in perspectives and conclusions from those of Pipes.

The history of modern Britain has elicited a huge body of more specialized studies, but no single book fully comparable to Gordon Wright's history of modern France exists for modern Britain. Robert K. Webb's *Modern England: From the 18th Century to the Present* (1993) can be recommended, as can Clayton and David Roberts's *A History of England, 1688 to the Present* (1980). Many of the works discussed below cover modern Britain from more restricted perspectives of time and theme.

There are also surprisingly few single-volume, highly readable overviews of Europe as a whole in the “long” nineteenth century (from 1815 to 1914), at least in comparison to the super-abundance of excellent single volumes covering the years from 1914 to the present. Robert Paxton’s *Europe in the Twentieth Century* (5th ed. 2011) ranks among the best of the latter, but also outstanding is Eric Dorn Brose’s *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (2005). Single-volume overviews dealing with shorter periods than a century are also numerous. Tony Judt’s *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (2006) might be termed the gold standard, remarkable in scope and insights – though no doubt daunting in length (960 pp.) and intimidating in intellectual tenor for those only beginning to read about the period.

Eric Hobsbawm’s several historical overviews have won an enthusiastic readership and have gone through many printings. His *The Age of Capital* (1996), dealing with the period from 1848 to 1875, was the second part of what was originally projected to be a trilogy, beginning with *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789–1848* (1996), to which was added *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (1989). A fourth volume finally ensued: *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century* (1996). Those four volumes cover the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in abundant and lively detail, from a Marxist perspective, though far from a narrow one.

Other volumes of overview or synthesis, covering the last two centuries from various focal points, exist in great number and variety: to diplomatic, political, economic, and social history may be added the history of women, of ethno-religious groups (Jews, Catholics, Protestants), of socialism and the working class, of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, of plagues and catastrophes, of art, architecture, science, technology – the list could go on for pages. By practical necessity, mention here must be limited to works dealing with the central questions of modern European history as defined in Part I, and obviously cannot cover every conceivable perspective on that history.

Ideologies are one of those central questions. For European ideologies in general, see David McLellan, *Ideology* (1986). The three expansive volumes of Leszek Kolakowski’s *Main Currents of Marxism* (many editions and printings) cover much more than Marxism. A shorter overview is Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (1984).

On plagues and the role of disease, two books, ranging outside modern European history, can be highly recommended: William McNeil, *Plagues and Peoples* (1986) and Sheldon Watts, *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power, and Imperialism* (2000).

On diplomatic history, see Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814–1914* (1992) and *Great Power Diplomacy since 1914* (2003).

On the history of women, see Renate Bridenthal, Susan Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (1997).

On economic history, David S. Landes’s *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (1969) has been long recognized as a major standard work. It is full of penetrating observations, if stylistically a bit of a challenge.

On the German Question and the related Jewish Question (and the background to the Holocaust), the two overviews of German history by Sheehan and Craig, listed above, may be considered sophisticated and ample. Albert S. Lindemann’s *Esau’s Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (1997) covers many nations;

a subsequent volume goes over some of the same material in condensed form (100 pp.): *Anti-Semitism before the Holocaust* (2001).

Biographies

The biographies of Europe's major figures can be considered part of a venerable literary form, reaching back to ancient times. Biographies are in bad odor among some professional historians, especially those hostile to anything resembling the "great men" approach to history, but the quality of many recent biographies differs enormously; the best are anything but narrow or historically unsophisticated accounts of individual lives. Many can be considered attractive introductions to general periods, and will be often mentioned in the Further Reading sections.

Notable examples of biographies that ably place historical figures in a broader context are Ian Kershaw's several studies of Hitler (further discussed in the Further Reading to Chapter 18, Chapter 19, and Chapter 20) and Richard Reeves's *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (2007). By no means are only great men dealt with in the best biographies: J.P. Netti's *Rosa Luxemburg* (1966; many editions and reprints) and Mark Bostridge's *Florence Nightingale: The Making of an Icon* (2008) are also expansive, well-informed introductions to the periods in which these two remarkable women lived. Robert K. Massie's *Nicholas and Alexandra* (2000), concentrating on the personal dramas of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife, ranks as one of the best-selling books of history in recent decades. It is a gripping tale, filled with colorful detail about the tsarist couple's tragic personal life but still not the kind of book that most modern scholars of Russian history are inclined to write.

Historiography and Bibliography

Readers interested in further exploring the often passionate controversies associated with modern European history could profitably begin with the American Historical Association's *Guide to Historical Literature* (1995). Its opening essay, "Theory and Practice in Historical Study," amply introduces the broad lines of recent interpretations and controversies. In the ninety-page introduction to Niall Ferguson's *Virtual History* (1999), there is a highly readable, if partisan, overview of theories of history. The American Historical Association's *Guide* also provides extensive bibliographical information. A long-standard world-history text, R.R. Palmer, Joel Colton, and Lloyd Kramer, *A History of the Modern World Since 1815* (9th ed. 2002), contains a remarkably expansive bibliographical section (some sixty pages of dense, double-column print) covering the history of the world but to a large extent devoted to modern Europe.

The computer age has many implications, positive and negative, for the study of history. The articles dealing with historical topics in Wikipedia are all works in progress and represent a remarkable collective effort, defying any brief summary. Most have the merit of being factually reliable and at least formally committed to balanced interpretations. However, their style is often aridly factual and their content lacking in analytical penetration. Most can serve as a handy reference, where details may be rapidly checked

out, but they are less often useful as guides to a more subtle historical understanding. Many of the Wikipedia articles provide helpful guides to pronunciation (even sound files by native speakers) of unfamiliar foreign names and terms, of which there are of course many in modern European history.

D.A. Trinkle and S.A. Merriman, eds., *The History Highway 2000: A Guide to Internet Resources* (2000) provides an extensive guide to using the Internet for historical topics.

Further Reading (to the Introduction)

In his many books and articles, Timothy Garton Ash has established himself as one of the most insightful observers of the European contemporary scene and of the relationship of Americans to Europeans. In regard to the themes of this Introduction, see especially his *The Free World: Europe, America, and the Surprising Future of the West* (2005). (See also the Further Reading sections for Chapter 26 and Chapter 27.)

Norman Davies's *Europe: A History* (1995) is an impressive if idiosyncratic work, covering Europe from the ice age to the Cold War, with a thorough exploration of the issue "What is Europe?" as well as a detailed history of the term.

Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies* (2005) covers much more than modern Europe but is highly informative and thought-provoking in terms of the most fundamental causes of Europe's rise.

Niall Ferguson's *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (2011) combatively takes up the issues of Europe's rise, and such themes as the importance of great men in that rise. Ferguson might be termed an extraordinarily prolific popular-professional historian – with a contrarian, generally conservative perspective, his books are readable and thought-provoking (and thus, of course, attract many critics).

Part I Romanticism and Revolt

The Seedtime of Modern Ideologies, 1815–40

The chapters of Part I are somewhat shorter, more general, and less chronological than the chapters of the following four parts of this volume. Chapter 1 takes a bird's-eye view of the generation before 1815, a quarter-century of war and revolution that deeply imprinted itself on the identity of Europeans, giving rise to “the mystique of revolution” and its associated trinity of liberty, equality, fraternity (major organizational themes of this volume). Chapter 2 takes a much more focused look at the decisions made in one year, 1815, in the efforts to bring order and stability back to Europe, at the Congress of Vienna. Those decisions were contested for the rest of the century (another organizing theme). Chapter 3 introduces additional revolutionary themes, grouped under the notion of “engines of change,” but especially scrutinizes the significance of industrialization and rapid population growth in European history. Chapter 4, the longest chapter, takes up the many formal ideologies or “isms” that appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century, two of which, liberalism and socialism, attempted to give more precise or coherent form to the revolutionary trinity mentioned above, in contrast to conservatism, which sought to expose it as fallacious and dangerous. In roughly the same years, a series of “questions” or problems were recognized, which contemporaries believed would be solved in the new world of progress and reason that was dawning. These questions, too, provide organizing themes for European history of the past two centuries, to be given a comprehensive assessment in the final chapter (Chapter 27).

1 The Legacy of the French Revolution

Europe in the last two hundred years, but especially in the first part of the nineteenth century, lived in the shadow of the French Revolution. That upheaval's remarkable accomplishments, as well as its destructiveness and shocking cruelties, influenced every European country and left many unfinished agendas: on the left, altruistic hopes and dreams; on the right, bitter resentments and fears.

France's Preeminence

In the century before 1789, France had already exercised a pervasive influence over the rest of Europe. The ruling orders of many countries spoke French in preference to their native tongues, and French literature, art, and fashions were in demand everywhere. France was *la grande nation* (the large/great nation), with the largest population in Europe, around 26 million by the eve of the Revolution. Prussia's population at that time was under 4 million, Britain's around 8 million, the Habsburg Empire's around 11 million, and Russia's perhaps 20 million. Paris was widely understood to be the cultural and intellectual capital of Europe.

Any development in such an influential nation was bound to have important repercussions for the rest of Europe. As the Habsburg statesman Metternich once quipped, "When France sneezes, Europe catches a cold." In the summer of 1789, France sneezed mightily. Thereafter, it overthrew its existing institutions with astonishing resolve, executing its king and queen, and perhaps 40,000 others, with the new guillotine. It launched a series of military campaigns that before long routed the armies of Europe's leading powers. In the process, France annexed sizeable stretches of neighboring territory and created French-dominated states along those much-expanded frontiers. Although forced back in

1815 into borders roughly similar to those existing before the Revolution, France had by then ruled for about two decades over a large percentage of Europe's population. Even those not formally annexed into the French Empire were obliged to adjust to laws and institutions fashioned in the French Revolution. The legacy of the Revolution in that sense was particularly enduring. Even in those areas that never experienced direct French rule, the revolutionary legacy was significant, in part because the leaders of most countries found it necessary to copy at least some French institutions in order to survive.

The Changes Made by the Revolution

Politically, the revolutionary period, 1789–1815, is one of daunting complexity, with sudden, violent shifts in revolutionary leadership. By 1795 three succeeding constitutions had already been adopted and then found wanting. Beginning in 1789, a massive, often chaotic shift in the relative power of various elements of France's population occurred, away from the monarch and the privileged orders toward the common people (the Third Estate, which constituted about 95 percent of the total population; the First Estate was the Church, the Second Estate the nobility). By late 1791, revolutionaries had introduced a new constitution as well as a ringing revolutionary statement of the "Rights of Man and the Citizen."

Much confusion and uncertainty marked these first years, but the beginnings of a long-lasting administrative system were being put into place, one that sought to rationalize and centralize the tottering maze of the Old Regime's administration. The agenda of reform included a new system of weights and measures (the metric system), a new calendar with ten-day weeks, new national holidays, and a new monetary system. Not all of these innovations survived, and most took some time to be implemented. The new calendar was especially confusing, and it turned out to be more than the general population could absorb – so unpopular that it was abandoned after a few years. Today the names of the new months are remembered primarily in the way that the events of the Revolution have been recorded. For example, what is now known as *Thermidor*, the "hot" month corresponding to July/August 1794, was when the Revolution began a rightward swing, in reaction to the excesses of the Terror. The modern political terms "right," "left," "reactionary," and "thermidorean" all originated in this period.

The Revolutionary Mystique

What is usually meant by the legacy of the French Revolution includes less palpable matters: ideals, goals, visions – and nightmares. The revolutionary mystique gripped a significant part of the intellectual elite of Europe with an intoxicating intensity. The shining vision of a transformed human condition affected some Europeans in ways that recall the messianic dreams – and the religious fanaticism – of past centuries. The selfless, heroic revolutionary became a model for significant parts of the restless youth of Europe, in paradoxical ways replicating the idealized Christian saint or crusading knight. The words of the late nineteenth-century anarchist revolutionary Alexander Kropotkin had obvious parallels to Christian symbolism: "The blood shed [in the French Revolution] was shed for

the whole human race.” Even those less profoundly affected by revolutionary ardor tended to venerate the Revolution; many believed that its undeniable failures would be rectified in revolutions to come. The usage of the term “revolution” became, again, reminiscent of so many religious terms, oddly nebulous and inclusive, referring not only to measurable political events but also to a vast historical process, beginning in 1789 and marching ever onward. Much of the political life of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came down to the question “the Revolution, for or against?” (For a guide to the pronunciation of foreign names, such as Péguy, and foreign-language terms, see their index entries, as well as the opening note to the index. One of many organizing themes of this volume is the way that European political life may be seen as alternating between what French author Charles Péguy in the early twentieth century famously termed *mystique* and *politique*: selfless and courageous idealism vs. disabused political calculation and cynical careerism, the one following the other inexorably. Péguy is further discussed in Chapter 11.)

Revolutionary reforms played a role in rendering European institutions more efficient and in making the lives of Europe’s common people freer and materially more secure – at least eventually, though not immediately. However, the mystique of revolution turned out to have a ghastly dark side. Political revolutions repeatedly awakened not only benevolent reasonableness but also the vilest instincts of the human heart, both in revolutionaries and in their opponents. Political revolutions have produced, from the guillotine of the French Revolution to the concentration camps of the Soviet Union, oceans of blood and unimaginable human suffering.

There was something eerily kindred, in both positive and negative ways, about the mystique of revolution and the mystique of religion. And what an irony – that the carnage of the wars of religion in the seventeenth century turned many, especially among the educated elites, away from religious faith and toward a belief in the power of reason, a belief that seemed to bear fruit, by the early twentieth century, in even more horrific brutalities than religious passion had produced in the seventeenth.

Whatever its similarities to a religious phenomenon, the French Revolution turned against organized religion, the Catholic Church in particular, and against most Christian dogma. Revolutionaries sought to replace the bigotry and superstition of the Church with more tolerant and rational beliefs. They also took the fateful step of expropriating the lands owned by the Church and using the sale of them to help finance the Revolution. That step further alienated elements of an already deeply divided general population, a large part of which held on to its Christian faith and remained firmly attached to traditional ways of doing things.

The Opening Stages of the Revolution

Each year of revolution brought dramatic, unanticipated developments, but the explicit goals of all revolutionaries were to put into practice the ideals of the Enlightenment, which in turn meant abolishing the privileged or “feudal” estates, considered corrupt, unjust, and inefficient. A general guide or motto for revolutionaries was the revolutionary trinity: liberty, equality, fraternity. Each was full of promise – and endless ambiguity. Initially, what rallied a significant part of the French people in 1789 was a thirst for “liberty” against “royal despotism.” Yet that goal proved vague and the unity associated

with it fragile, based on hopelessly contradictory and self-serving definitions of liberty among the various ranks of the French population. Still, no one expected, let alone planned, what actually happened once the king's will had been successfully challenged and he had agreed to call the Estates General (a legislative assembly of France's "estates" or branches of feudal society) for the first time since 1614. The Revolution (a term only later used) emerged haltingly out of a series of poorly coordinated and contradictory protests against the king's efforts to reform taxation before 1789.

Once the Estates General had met in the early summer of 1789, a process resembling a chain reaction began. Expectations were awakened and various interest groups energized, all facilitated by the king's indecisiveness and incompetence. A potent mix of angry urban mobs, panic in the countryside, and intellectuals intoxicated by Enlightened ideals – soon intensified by the fear of invasion by foreign powers – produced a series of changes that, even in retrospect, are astonishing in their scope and ambition.

The Causes of the Revolution: Precedents

In the following century, a number of observers, among them Karl Marx, argued that, behind the fog and flurry of events, the Revolution had been the expression of conflict between social classes, with an emerging class of bourgeois capitalists vanquishing the feudal nobility, in the process establishing a new legal order that would allow capitalism to grow unimpeded. Recent historians have substantially qualified or flatly rejected the Marxist interpretation of the Revolution, in part because the Marxist concept of social class tends to fall apart under rigorous analysis. However, providing a more satisfactory general theory to explain just how and why it all happened has proven a continuing challenge. Unquestionably, profound shifts in opinion in France had occurred over the past several centuries; practices and beliefs that had been acceptable in 1614 were widely considered unjust and irrational by 1789. One notion in particular had spread into large parts of the population: Sovereignty, or the right to rule, properly derived from the consent of the people rather than from God's will expressed through anointed kings. In a related way, the intricate network of special rights and corporate privileges characteristic of the Old Regime was losing much of the popular acceptance or veneration it had once enjoyed.

These inchoate feelings about political sovereignty, justice, and rationality had found focus and a model of a sort in the preceding American Revolution, which had evoked much discussion in France and Europe as a whole. The British colonies in North America had successfully fought for liberty against what they denounced as British tyranny. The Declaration of Independence was an eloquent expression of the ideals of the Enlightenment. The Americans, moreover, had adopted a constitution that put those ideals into action. The revolutionaries in America seemed to have demonstrated that a constitutional republic based on popular sovereignty and the protection of individual rights was feasible, in stark opposition to the prevailing belief in Europe that the republican form of government was possible only in a city-state or very small country. Even what came to be termed "the right to revolution," the legitimacy of violent opposition to tyranny, gained increasing support, though that notion had roots in Christian political philosophy, itself looking back to the thought of the Greeks and Romans.

However, the extent to which the American precedent was relevant for France remained open to question. The British colonies in North America were a remote outpost, with a small if rapidly growing population (about 2 million by the last years of the eighteenth century) that was culturally and linguistically homogeneous (excluding its slaves and the native Indian population). *La grande nation* was ten times as populous as the British colonies, and it faced a range of historically rooted problems that the colonists did not, prominent among them what to do about feudal privileges. Feudalism violated not only individual liberty but also the second element of the revolutionary trinity: equality, a word that meant remarkably different things to different people, although the meaning that seemed most widely agreed upon in 1789 was civil equality, or the equality of the individual citizen under a single legal system. That notion was fundamentally different from the Old Regime's recognition, and sanctification, of legal or civil inequality, according to membership in a hierarchy of corporate entities, involving often great differences in material wealth, social prestige, and political power.

The Ambiguous Ideal of Equality

The Old Regime, buttressed as it was by Christian universalism, did recognize equality in one major regard – that is, equality before God, or the equal worth of the human soul in God's eyes – even if such equality found only the faintest expression in the legal rights of the lowest orders. The universalism of the Enlightenment was perhaps most famously expressed in Thomas Jefferson's "all men are created equal," although that, too, must be considered a somewhat cryptic pronouncement, one that stressed a metaphysical equality in "creation" but definitely was not meant to imply a belief in the desirability of social or economic equality. For Jefferson, a wealthy slaveholder, "equality" also did not mean physical or intellectual equality, since he harbored substantial doubts about the equality of those members of the human family coming from Africa.

The civil equality introduced by the French Revolution, for all its seeming radicalism at the time, also had definite and revealing limits. The constitution of 1791, while establishing one law for all adult male citizens, introduced the significant qualification of "active" and "passive" citizenship, with wealth determining who was eligible for active citizenship. Only a small percentage of the male population was finally given the vote. An even smaller percentage were to enjoy the right to hold public office. Ironically, the electoral procedures of the Old Regime in practice engaged a wider part of the population than did the first revolutionary constitution.

Even when the Revolution moved in a more egalitarian direction, as reflected in the constitution of 1793, which introduced universal manhood suffrage, few revolutionaries contemplated measures designed to encourage economic or social equality. Price controls were introduced for a brief period, under the duress of war, as a way to protect the poor, but when François Babeuf, in his notorious Conspiracy of the Equals (August 1796), plotted to seize power and introduce a regime that would actively pursue economic equality by distributing private wealth to aid the poor, he was imprisoned and sentenced to death. The notion of giving equal rights to women also found very few defenders during the years of the Revolution. The ideal of equality, then, even more than that of liberty, remained uncertain in meaning and application, an unfulfilled

legacy for the following years, one that radical leftists believed “the Revolution” would ultimately clarify in the direction of greater social and economic equality.

It would be anachronistic to speak of the ideal of racial equality in the 1790s; the meaning of the word “race” was still vague compared to the highly charged connotations it would later acquire, but nonetheless most revolutionaries, imbued as they were with Enlightened ideals, professed a belief in human equality, in the sense of the equal *worth* of humanity’s many varieties or “races.” However, this metaphysical faith did not typically involve a belief in the equal mental and physical *abilities* of all peoples. Attitudes closely resembling what would later be termed racism unquestionably existed among even the most radical of revolutionaries, but nonetheless the Revolution’s benevolent and optimistic universalism stood out: The “Rights of Man and the Citizen” were proclaimed during the Revolution, not simply the rights of French citizens (or of the French race). Revolutionaries generally opposed the enslavement of black Africans, and non-Europeans born in France could at least in principle become citizens.

Civil Equality for Jews?

There was one non-European group or “race,” the Jews, that might be considered an exception, and the issue of its status attracted much attention. Jews constituted only around 0.1 percent of the population of France, concentrated in the northeast of the country, but whether Jews should be granted civil equality was the source of an extended and rancorous debate. Jews of the day were considered a separate corporate body or “nation,” ruled by separate laws and customs. However, unlike the Protestant population in France (around 1 percent of the total), the Jews were not considered European, let alone French, and of course by definition were not part of Christendom.

Many in France, including Jews themselves, also thought of Jews as physically and psychically different in essential, unchangeable ways (basically what “race” would come to mean by the late nineteenth century), consistent with their foreign origin, different religious beliefs, distinct culture, and separate language. Nonetheless, after deliberations lasting over a year, Jews were included among those granted civil equality in the constitution of 1791. The majority in favor of this inclusion was slim, and the nature of the lengthy debates made it clear that even those who supported granting Jews civil equality did so out of an ideological attachment to the concept of human equality and adaptability, not out of respect for the Jews in their present state. After the vote, angry dissent in regard to the suitability of Jews as citizens was repeatedly expressed, and the civil equality of Jews would come up again for serious reconsideration under Napoleon.

The Many Meanings of Fraternity

The Jewish issue touched revealingly upon the last element of the revolutionary trinity: fraternity. This is the most difficult of the trinity to evaluate, both in terms of its practical expression in the 1790s and its long-term legacy. Jews and non-Jews in late eighteenth-century France obviously did not think of one another as part of the same people or nation, let alone as brothers. The wider implications of civil equality for Jews were for

similar reasons uncertain: Would they eventually change and become French or would they remain foreign residents in the French nation, with formal rights but still substantially separate? Fraternal feelings among much of the rest of the population also remained a distant ideal; local fidelities often prevailed over feelings of national unity, or of “Frenchness.” The Revolution paradoxically intensified hostilities, underlining the lack of fraternal feelings within large parts of the populations living in France.

Yet an emerging sense of fraternity in some parts of the population also characterized the 1790s. This sense was an aspect of the dynamics of revolution, as revolutionaries joined ranks in the struggle to retain power against mounting resistance inside France. But it was more powerfully enhanced in defending the French *patrie* (fatherland) against foreign invasion. Once Napoleon had come to power, fraternal feelings merged with the *gloire* (glory) of French military victories. *Patrie* and *gloire* became watchwords for French patriots, in practice more widely and lastingly embraced than equality or liberty.

The ideal of fraternity had implications far beyond French nationalism, however, and was an especially enduring legacy of the Revolution insofar as it merged into modern socialism. Fraternity, suggesting as it does feelings of emotional closeness and social cohesion, may be considered even more essential to socialism than equality, since a society of social and economic equals can be non-socialist, based on competitive individualism and private property (the emerging ideal in the United States). The ideal of fraternity was obviously very old, part of the Christian heritage (“brothers in Christ”). It looked to the past, insofar as the corporatist nature of premodern society tended to emphasize mutual responsibilities and emotional ties. Still, these were ties of inequality, linked to hierarchies of authority, of *noblesse oblige* (“nobility obligates,” the notion that being a member of the nobility involves social and moral responsibilities to the lower orders). In a similar way, Christianity’s ideals included such mystical concepts as the Christian community as part of the body of Christ, with obligations to charity or loving kindness (*caritas*) for the needy and unfortunate.

The word “fraternity” itself suggests the obvious gender bias of the day (itself linked to the gender bias of both Christianity and Judaism). While women were included in the emerging sense of the united French people and nation, their participation in politics and the public realm was significantly restricted. They were not given equal political rights in any of the constitutions of the 1790s, and their rights would be even further curtailed under Napoleon’s empire. However, women and femininity gained a symbolic affirmation in the Revolution: French currency, postage stamps, and public statues would for the next two centuries prominently feature Marianne, or Liberty, as a woman. She would be famously portrayed in a painting by the Romantic painter Eugène Delacroix as “leading the people” on the barricades in 1830 (and of course is featured on the cover of this volume). Liberty as a woman was even more famously represented in the Statue of Liberty, a gift by the French Republic to the United States in 1886. As will be explored in later chapters, female virtues were often associated with higher levels of civilization.

The Revolution: Progressive or Regressive?

Liberty, equality, and fraternity were, then, potent ideals with some concrete implications but also with a sprawling, even mystical legacy allowing for diverse interpretations by contemporaries and succeeding generations. Partly for such reasons, what was actually

being fought for in France after 1789 is not easy to describe or even understand. The Revolution has often been said to have moved France “forward,” but whether each of its stages represented progress is highly debatable, in part because the concept of progress itself has so much emotionally laden ambiguity. Most historians now describe the Revolution as both progressive and regressive; it achieved liberty, equality, and fraternity in some regards but threatened them in others. It is awkward to describe the rampaging Paris mob as a progressive force; most of its members were driven by immediate and often ugly resentments – anything but reasoned, altruistic principles – and they often expressed themselves in brutally violent ways. Conservatives feared the Paris mob, and that fear no doubt helped reformers to get their measures passed over conservative resistance.

Just as the mob was only ambiguously a force for progress, so Louis XVI cannot be adequately described as simply against progress, since he and the French kings before him also had favored rational reform, especially when that reform promised to increase the wealth, efficiency, and power of the state. As many observers later pointed out, the reforms of the Revolution, in centralizing the state and curtailing the power of the nobility and the Church, succeeded in achieving the centralizing and rationalizing goals that French kings had been working on, at a much slower pace, for well over a century.

Louis XVI, however, was no progressive in doggedly struggling to preserve the principle of royal privilege. The peculiar and confusing range of meanings associated with that familiar word, privilege, also needs to be carefully scrutinized. Privilege has a basic meaning of a special advantage or immunity (from taxation, for example), usually sanctioned by custom or birth rather than earned by individual merit. That range of meanings, however, meshes at one extreme with the concept of “rights” (as in the rights of the citizen) and at the other extreme with the notion of “sinecure” (a paid position involving minimal work or service, close to the concept of parasitism).

The nobility in 1789 denounced the exercise of *royal* privilege as an intolerable despotism when it violated *noble* privileges, which they considered sacred. However, the king considered royal privilege to be sacred – indeed, a divine right. Revealingly, most nobles, once their own privileges came up for hostile scrutiny by revolutionaries (who in turn saw noble privilege as an intolerable despotism), rapidly rallied to the king and to a general defense of the merits or sacred nature of privilege. No less revealingly, the members of the bourgeoisie, or the untitled middle spectrum of society, were scandalized when their own inherited private property was denounced as an unacceptable privilege by those radical revolutionaries who represented the poor. Indeed, even more uncomfortable questions about privilege continued to arise: Women denounced the privileges associated with being born a male; black slaves in the colonies denounced the privileges of being born white; the Church, the guilds, and the towns all enjoyed extensive privileges, which they all termed their own inherited “rights.” And what would be the result if *all* privileges were abolished? It would be a world so different that few could imagine it. The identities into which all are born would be changed beyond recognition.

The escalating claims, in the opening stages of the Revolution, by various constituencies to remedy immediate and pressing grievances were often inelegantly

and even incoherently presented; they were translated into more coherent and literate form by those lawyers and other intellectuals who wrote up the revolutionary constitutions (of 1791, 1793, and 1795), but it is doubtful that those educated elites were actually or accurately speaking for the majority of the population, or even for the majority of the literate population. Nor were the intellectual elites speaking for the bourgeoisie in any sense that seems coherent today. Still, beyond all the complexities that recent historians have introduced, one can say that certain basic and interrelated notions seemed to enjoy wide support. Those included popular sovereignty (rather than the divine right of kings to rule), an end to the legal privileges of the older estates (making all citizens equal before the law), and a rational reorganization of government (streamlining it, to make it more efficient, and weeding out the parasitic office-holders).

Insofar as basic differences about such revolutionary principles arose, members of the initial national assembly divided into “right” and “left,” originally according to where they sat in the semicircular assembly meeting hall. The left tended to have greater confidence about the powers of human reason and a more deeply critical attitude to tradition and privilege. The left believed in the possibility of steady progress and human improvement. (“Progressive” is a term with a long and checkered history, but central to its meaning was a confidence that material conditions could be improved, as could the human condition more generally, in contrast to established notions of history as cyclical and the human condition as irreparably flawed.)

In the meeting halls of the revolutionary assemblies of the 1790s, a kind of macabre musical chairs came into operation, where those on the extreme right were forced out, often fleeing the country to avoid being sent to prison or to the guillotine, whereas those initially on the left found themselves pushed to the center by ever more extreme deputies on their left. In the summer of 1794 the music stopped, as it were, and then the game of musical chairs began in the opposite direction, with those on the left pushed to emigration, prison, or the guillotine.

Even though the left favored change, based on Enlightened principles of rationality and utility, elements resembling the old religiosity and dogmatism seeped back in. Perhaps more accurately stated, the left’s beliefs had much about them that ultimately came down to a new kind of faith, to convictions that were little more rational or any less dogmatic than religious beliefs. Among the obvious signs of that secular religiosity were the new rituals that emerged around the commemoration of decisive revolutionary events or “days” (*journées*). These eventually merged into “sacred narratives” similar to those that are common to all religions. Just as Kropotkin wrote of a cleansing revolutionary blood in ways that recalled Christian notions of Christ’s sacrifice, so the vocabulary of the left came to be filled with emotion-filled allusions to such events as the storming of the Bastille (on July 14, 1789), to this day the principal national holiday in France, or to the Great Fear (also in July, when peasants went on a rampage). Revolutionary armies marched singing *Allons enfants de la patrie!* (forward, sons of the fatherland!), the first line of *La Marseillaise*, the French national anthem to this day. The parallels with “Onward, Christian Soldiers!” are only too obvious; the content was different but the form and emotionality were strikingly similar, suggesting how both served basic human needs in ways to this day only imperfectly understood.

Further Reading

The first chapters of Gordon Wright's *France in Modern Times* (5th ed. 1995) provide an excellent overview of the French Revolution and its legacy.

Crane Brinton's *A Decade of Revolution* (1985) is dated (1st ed. 1936) but still a highly readable overview by a noted Harvard historian.

Covering more recent reinterpretations of the Revolution are François Furet's *Interpreting the French Revolution* (1981) and Lynn Hunt's *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (1984). Simon Schama's *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989) is a profoundly negative account of the results of the Revolution by a leading professional historian, but aimed at a broad audience.

Vincent Cronin, *Napoleon Bonaparte: An Intimate Biography* (2009) is one of the best of hundreds of biographies of Napoleon.

2 The Congress of Vienna and Post-Napoleonic Europe 1815–30

The gathering of Europe's leading statesmen in Vienna in 1814–15 has been selected as a starting date of this volume for a number of reasons. The year 1815 has long been considered a watershed by historians, both because the Congress of Vienna's decisions were made final in that year and because of Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815. During the deliberations of the Congress, the boundaries of Europe's states were redrawn, the principle of dynastic legitimacy reaffirmed, and the specter of renewed Napoleonic rule banished. The new borders and extensive territorial adjustments established at the Congress lasted for several generations, with many long-range implications. The Congress stands out simply as a splendid spectacle: The ceremonial pomp and splendor of court life at the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna and the intricate meetings, lasting nearly a year, of Europe's leading statesmen add up to a colorful and crucial story.

A Uniquely European Meeting

An analysis of the Congress brings up again the issue of defining Europe, of deciding what was unique about it, for this meeting was distinctly European in nature; anything closely comparable to it was unlikely to occur in the rest of the world at this time. Tsar Alexander I proclaimed at the Congress that “we are all Europeans now,” suggesting a new-found or reasserted unity of interests. If he had announced that “we are all one big family now,” the claim would have had some genetic basis, for the dynasties reinstalled in Europe's many states in 1815 were remarkably much related to one another by blood and marriage. Among the most eminent were the Bourbons (in France, Spain, and



Map 2.1 Europe, 1815.

southern Italy), the Habsburgs (in Austria and northern Italy), the Hohenzollerns (in Prussia), and the Romanovs (in Russia). Each of these dynasties sent representatives to Vienna, and nearly every monarch in Europe counted at least a distant cousin, if not a brother, sister, father, or mother, in the royal houses of other countries.

In the course of the nineteenth century, this dynastic internationalism would become even more notable. Britain's Queen Victoria, of Hanoverian lineage (a minor German dynasty) on her father's side, married her first cousin, a German prince; her mother was a German princess, her uncle the king of Belgium (also of German origin). Toward the end of her long rule, in the 1890s, she could count scores of relatives, children, and grandchildren among Europe's rulers, including the emperors of Germany (Wilhelm II) and Russia (Nicholas II). Upon her death in 1901, her son became King Edward VII. Photos of these three – Wilhelm, Nicholas, and Edward – together at Victoria's funeral show a striking family resemblance.

There was much else that pulled Europe's royalty and upper nobility together by early 1815. Nearly all were united in dread of Napoleon – there is no more effective unifier than a powerful common enemy – and of further revolutionary upheavals. Not all members of Europe's dynasties were hardened Francophobes; a few had even married into the Bonapartist dynasty at the height of Napoleon's power (Marie-Louise, Napoleon's second wife, was a daughter of the Habsburg emperor), but most of Europe's royalty and nobility considered 1789–1814 to be nightmare years. Some denounced Napoleon as the Antichrist. Tsar Alexander in particular made much of that theme as well as the related one of Europe's Christian heritage. He now proclaimed that the followers of the Prince of Peace, whether Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant, should cooperate in assuring a Christian peace for Europe, after so many years of mutually destructive war.

In that spirit, Alexander composed an initial draft of what would become known as the Holy Alliance. He proclaimed that it would uphold Christian ideals in international relations and stamp out the godless, anti-Christian principles of the Revolution and Napoleon. Most other leaders were suspicious of his motives; only Prussia and Austria (or the Habsburg Empire) actually joined the Holy Alliance. Britain's Lord Castlereagh derided it as “nonsense” and “mysticism,” in part because of its extremely vague, open-ended quality (signers committed themselves, for example, to offer mutual assistance in case there arose, in any country, a danger to peace, justice, or religion).

These European dynasties may have been one big family, but they were far from a harmonious one, as the tempestuous negotiations at the Congress of Vienna would underline. Still, their sense of having common interests was more genuine than that of Europe's general population in its far-flung states and regions. In that regard, the comparison made in Chapter 1 between the European scene and that of North America is further instructive. The leading statesmen of the former thirteen British colonies, commoners all, had also recently gathered for momentous decisions, for a meeting or congress that was more binding than anything being contemplated by the delegates to the Congress of Vienna: They aspired to unite their individual states into a single sovereign American nation, after their attempt to “confederate” them in a loosely conceived union proved unsatisfactory.

These “Americans” (the term was not yet current) had begun to think of themselves as a single people in a single nation, whereas Europeans were beginning to emphasize their national differences from one another, in a number of sovereign states with different languages, cultures, and histories. The Americans of the former thirteen

colonies retained deep-seated fidelities to their individual states, but the great majority spoke English and shared Anglo-Protestant political and cultural values. Americans defined themselves as a free people, equal citizens, not the subjects of kings and nobles or tied down by feudal obligations.

In the broader sense of “America,” including all of the Americas (Canada, Mexico, and the states and peoples to Mexico’s south), the notion of a congress for purposes comparable to those of the Congress of Vienna was not seriously contemplated by any major figure or nation. Being a European, then, involved a sense of identity that was, on the one hand, looser than that of the Americans of the former thirteen colonies but, on the other, tighter than that of the residents of Latin America. The various nations, or proto-nations, of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking South America also never developed a congress system among themselves comparable to that of nineteenth-century Europe, and of course never came to see themselves as a single people aspiring to forge a single sovereign nation, even though they did share Catholic religion, cultural values, and language (Spanish and closely related Portuguese). In other areas of the globe where there were strong historical, linguistic, cultural, or religious affinities, such as China, India, or Arabia, a congress system of sovereign, independent nations that were united in values and purpose was even less part of their mental world. To repeat, the Congress of Vienna revealed much that was uniquely European.

Developments in both North and South America since the 1770s were much on the minds of those meeting at Vienna in 1815, but mostly as a warning rather than as positive models to be emulated. Those developments represented revolts against European, mostly Spanish and British, domination. They were based on revolutionary principles (anticolonialism, republicanism, popular sovereignty) that were starkly opposed to the guiding principles of the delegations to Vienna. The Congress of Vienna was called by kings, emperors, and their ministers, intent on a restoration of their power and privileges. The delegates to Vienna actually did not want to unite Europe so much as to bolster a decentralized Europe of sovereign, independent states, dominated by roughly equal major powers.

The Major Powers: Goals and Compromises

The major powers in 1815 were Austria, Britain, Prussia, and Russia (and of course defeated France). Spain, invaded by the armies of the Revolution and harshly oppressed by Napoleon, had been a great power in the sixteenth century, but had so declined by 1815 that it counted for little in the calculations of those who convened the Congress. Spain’s weakening in relation to the other European powers would continue throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so much so that other Europeans were known for a condescending quip: “Africa begins at the Pyrenees.” Comparably snide remarks were often made about the southern part of Italy, but in fact the residents of most European countries harbored what would later be termed racist stereotypes about one another.

What the delegates to Vienna would be able to accomplish in terms of reestablishing something resembling the pre-1789 order and a workable balance of power remained highly uncertain. A quarter-century had passed; many new social groups and other interests had emerged and gained a degree of legitimacy – so many that a thoroughgoing return to the past could not be seriously entertained. There were, to be sure, some

bitterly vengeful royalists, notorious for having learned nothing and forgotten nothing since 1789, but their influence was not decisive at this point. No doubt, too, kings and nobles across Europe had suffered traumatic losses, whereas significant numbers of commoners had risen in station and wealth, but simple logic suggested that the formerly privileged and the newly established could not both be entirely satisfied. Civil strife and yet further bloody clashes on the battlefield loomed as the alternatives to compromise.

A central concern of those convening the Congress was to devise effective ways to contain France, the trouble-maker of the past generation. A closely related concern was to reestablish a viable balance of power between Europe's major powers, so that no other power could emerge as dominant. That was of special concern in regard to Russia, since its enormous armies had swept into much of Europe in defeating Napoleon. After the catastrophes of his Russian campaign in 1812, Napoleon had been obliged to retreat in October 1813 by the armies of Prussia, Austria, and Russia at the Battle of the Nations near Leipzig. At the same time, British forces in Spain were marching toward the French southern border. Napoleon abdicated in April 1814 and was exiled to Elba, a small island off the northwestern coast of Italy (see Figure 2.1).

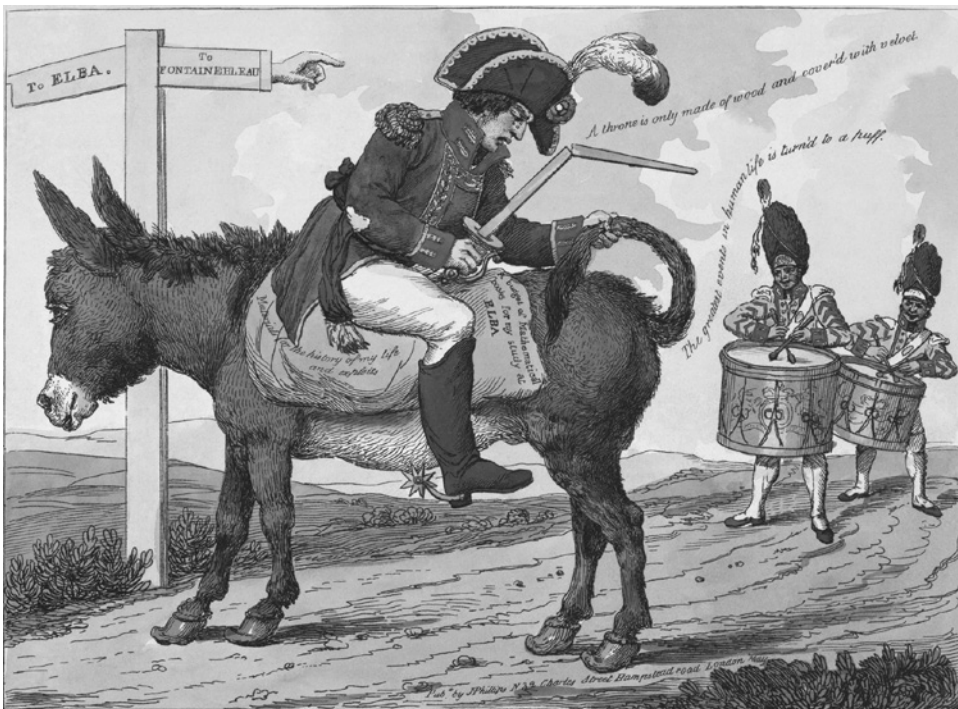


Figure 2.1 The journey of a modern hero, to the island of Elba. Hand-colored etching, 18.9 × 22.7 cm, published by J. Phillips, London, 1814. The text coming from the donkey's bottom reads: "The greatest events in human life is turn'd to a puff." Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC. Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-ppmsca-04308.

Napoleon Returns: The Hundred Days

The delegates to the Congress of Vienna began to gather in the late summer and autumn of 1814, but at a leisurely pace. In style, their arrival in Austria's capital city was heavy with symbolism: It was a return of the Old Regime, of haughty nobles, powdered wigs, and elegantly gowned ladies, arriving with ceremony and numerous retinue. Before long they were making regular appearances at glittering balls and receptions. There were some nasty episodes, even a few duels, over issues of precedence, rank, and procedures. Serious negotiations about the peace agreements finally got underway by September. Progress was made on many nettlesome issues, but a half-year passed without final agreements being reached. Then, in March 1815, news arrived that sent a shiver of alarm through the ranks of these strutting lords and graceful ladies: Napoleon had escaped from Elba! Landing in France, he was hailed by exultant throngs of French, and he began immediately to rebuild an army.

Napoleon's enthusiastic reception had much to do with the fact that the efforts to restore the Bourbon dynasty were not going well. Louis XVIII, a younger brother of the hapless and eventually headless Louis XVI, emerged as the most acceptable candidate, but that prominence did not mean that there was much genuine enthusiasm for him. Looking older than his sixty years, obese and easy-going, he seemed less vengeful than many other returning exiles. He was fortunate in that the peace treaty he was offered by the victorious alliance was surprisingly generous, helping to generate popular acquiescence to the restoration of the Bourbons. France was allowed to retain its military conquests up to 1792 (when Louis XVI was still on the throne), and even to keep the works of art that France's revolutionary armies had plundered throughout Europe in following years.

In internal policies, too, realism and gestures of conciliation tended to prevail at first. Louis was finally persuaded to grant an amnesty to those associated with the guillotining of his brother – obviously a very bitter pill – and he agreed to retain a significant number of the high officials who had served under Napoleon, mostly out of practical necessity. For similarly practical considerations, he did not try to undo the far-reaching institutional and legal reforms introduced since 1789, but he did insist on his divine right as king. The new written constitution observed that he ruled by the consent of the people *and* the will of God.

Louis's conciliatory initiatives angered other legitimists, especially in the entourage of his younger brother, the Count of Artois (who would become King Charles X in 1824). Dubbed "Ultras" at the time, these reactionaries succeeded in alienating and alarming much of France's population. Napoleon's appeal was all the greater since he now promised a more liberal rule than he had previously exercised, and he forswore further military adventures. Still, he and his supporters understood full well that a decisive victory in battle would be necessary if his new regime were to have any chance of surviving. He hastily rebuilt his army and marched to face the enemy armies gathering at France's northern borders.

Before long it became evident that Napoleon's old magic was gone. He was defeated at Waterloo on June 18, 1815, a battle thereafter synonymous with grand defeat. On June 22, Napoleon abdicated for a second time and was exiled to St. Helena, an isolated and

windswept island in the southern Atlantic Ocean, watched over by his British captors. He died there in 1821, at fifty-two years of age, famously murmuring on his deathbed, "what a romance my life has been!"

After Waterloo, the peace treaty presented for Louis XVIII's signature was, not surprisingly, less generous than the one offered the year before. Yet it was still conciliatory, since the great powers did not want to burden him with a deeply vengeful peace. France's northern borders were slightly redrawn, an indemnity of 700 million francs was imposed, and an occupying army was stationed in the country. In what was termed a "white terror," the Ultra camp exacted a vengeance upon those who had rallied to Napoleon. A number of his leading supporters were murdered, and Catholic mobs stormed Protestant areas (known to be more favorable to Napoleon), rampaging and killing. The new Chamber of Deputies, elected by a mere 100,000 voters, mostly large landowners, was dominated by hard-core reactionaries. The situation within France remained tense throughout the year and beyond. Such was in fact the case in the rest of Europe, even the British Isles. A lid had been clamped on, but whether it would blow off was anyone's guess.

The Issue of Poland

Once the immediate crisis presented by Napoleon's escape had been dealt with, the delegates in Vienna continued to grapple with a number of unresolved issues. One of the most vexing was what to do about Poland, a country that could plausibly claim the title of "the Christ among nations" for the suffering that its population endured. That title in 1815 had to do with a previously mentioned point: Poland's borders on all sides remained unresolved and contested, with few natural markers. A century earlier the Polish Commonwealth had encompassed more territory than France, but, in a series of invasions by its neighbors in 1772, 1793, and 1795, Poland was completely devoured by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, ceasing to exist as an independent sovereign state until 1919. In the years immediately following the 1795 partition, matters were further complicated, in that Napoleon briefly restored Poland as a grand duchy, though with only a fraction of the territory that had been in the earlier Commonwealth.

With Napoleon now in exile, differences of opinion emerged among the delegates to Vienna about how to rectify what Tsar Alexander denounced as the "crime" of Poland's partitions. These differences finally turned ugly, bringing the great powers to the edge of war. Alexander proposed that Poland be reconstituted as a kingdom, with the tsar of Russia (that is, himself) as its king. The other powers greeted this proposal with ill-concealed suspicion; they feared giving an expansionist Russia, whose troops now occupied much of the contested Polish areas, far too much power in central Europe.

But, as war clouds loomed, diplomatic jockeying of the old-fashioned sort came into play. The Prussian representative indicated that his country was willing to consent to Alexander's proposal if Prussia were given some of the territories of Saxony, along Prussia's southern border. Klemens von Metternich, the Austrian representative and key figure at the congress, was alarmed at the prospect of either Prussian or Russian expansion in the area; he refused to accept cutting up Saxony because he believed doing so would make Prussia too strong in German-speaking areas. This impasse underlined

how volatile and unpredictable the notion of a balance of power could be. Reckless appetites – perhaps not “criminal” but also not very Christian or all that different from those of 1772, 1793, and 1795 – still characterized the leaders of Europe’s states, even if Napoleon’s conquests had temporarily made those leaders inclined to declarations of international peace and Christian harmony.

This restless search for aggrandizement remained a fundamental characteristic of the European state system for the next century, and stubborn suspicion of the motives of others continued to linger in the spirits of the delegates to the Congress. Alexander’s posture of mystical piety had not caused the others to lower their defenses. They did not know whether to accept his religiosity as genuine or regard it simply as a ploy. They all spoke of the need for a balance of power, but, since they were themselves constantly scheming for ways to gain advantage from the balance, they only naturally expected that he was doing the same. All of this was, yet again, so characteristically European – constantly courting danger.

However serious the rhetoric about the crime of the partitions, Russia, Prussia, and Austria were in truth not much interested in giving back the Polish territories they had earlier absorbed, or in reestablishing a sovereign and independent Poland. However, they did all express a strong desire to make adjustments in the European international system so that any *future* carving-up of a weakened major European state could be prevented. A compromise was finally worked out, due in part to the inspired scheming of Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, the representative of France, who had been, up to this point, a somewhat isolated figure at the Congress. He adroitly exploited the divisions of the great powers over Poland, reestablishing France as a bargaining partner, by allying with Britain and Austria against Russia and Prussia, obliging the latter two to back down. The point should not be missed that it was power more than sweet reasonableness or Christian charity that led to the compromise.

Talleyrand was a remarkably nimble survivor. Now in his early sixties, he had served the Bourbons before the Revolution. Thereafter he had held various positions in the revolutionary governments of the 1790s, then had served as adviser to Napoleon. Now he was serving Louis XVIII (and yet again, after the revolution of 1830, he would be adviser to the Orleanist King Louis-Philippe). The compromise he helped to construct trimmed Napoleon’s Duchy of Poland to about two-thirds of its already much-diminished size and upgraded it into a kingdom, with Tsar Alexander as its king. Prussia was allowed to expand southward by absorbing about two-thirds of Saxony, leaving the king of Saxony with the remaining third (because of his recent alliance with Napoleon, he was in a vulnerable position).

For all the crocodile tears, the crime of the partitions was hardly rectified, since Austria retained Galicia (the extensive southwestern territories of prepartition Poland), Prussia retained Posen (the western-most part of prepartition Poland), and Russia retained, aside from the newly created Kingdom of Poland, territories that included Lithuania, Byelorussia (or White Russia), and the Ukraine, stretching from the Baltic to the Black seas. Each of these once-Polish-ruled territories remained parts of Austria, Prussia, and Russia; they did not gain the status, in other words, of formally separate areas, in contrast to the new Kingdom of Poland (thereafter commonly referred to as Congress Poland). For the next two centuries, all of these once-Polish-ruled regions would share in Poland’s tragic history of constant invasion, with

special horrors from 1914 to 1945. Of course, the extent to which each can be considered properly Polish is a moot point; although they had once been part of the Polish Commonwealth, most of the peoples in them were not themselves ethnic Poles (the most numerous were, in rough order, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Germans, and Jews).

Other Territorial Settlements

The final compromise over Poland had parallels in the way other territorial settlements were agreed upon by the Congress of Vienna: Provinces were allocated and borders were redrawn without much attention to what the peoples within them wanted but rather according to the appetites and perceived interests of the great powers. There was nonetheless a grudging recognition among them of the practical limits to what could be restored to pre-1789 borders. A number of the kingdoms and other territorial arrangements that had been put into place by Napoleon were allowed to survive. The mostly German-speaking areas of western and central Europe were organized into thirty-eight entities, under a loosely integrated German Confederation, or *Bund*. The term "Germany" was used at this time in a cultural-linguistic sense, often as "the Germanies," but there was no single sovereign state claiming to represent all of Germany. It was patently impractical for those at Vienna to ignore the ways that the French revolutionaries and Napoleon had redrawn the map of Europe. Between 1793 and 1814, many German-speaking areas had been fully integrated into the French nation, all the way up to the Rhine – indeed, for a while, extending along the North Sea to Hamburg – and as such had been divided into French *départements* ruled directly from Paris. Many of the remaining smaller German states, east of the Rhine, had then been united into what Napoleon had termed the Confederation of the Rhine.

The new German Confederation created by the Congress of Vienna extended to Danzig on the Baltic Sea – much further to the east, in other words, than had Napoleon's Confederation of the Rhine. From there its boundaries were drawn in a southwesterly direction, turning, about 200 miles east of Berlin, in a southeasterly direction, and then again to the southwest, in a relatively straight line, passing close to Vienna, all the way to the Adriatic Sea. This was a large, diverse area, and the new German Confederation was by no means a unification of all Germans into something resembling a centralized sovereign nation-state. Aside from the uncertainty about which groups were to be classified as genuinely German, within the Confederation were large populations of patently non-Germanic Slavic-speakers, notably Czechs and South Slavs, as well as Italians. Moreover, most of the German member states of the new Confederation jealously guarded their independence and emphasized their sense of historic difference. Their rulers were not interested in German political unity or in a more tightly integrated organization of German states. Still, the new Confederation did provide a new focus for things German, a new perspective on the long-standing German Question.

In Italy, too, the French revolutionary regimes had extensively redrawn the pre-1789 map, incorporating much of northwestern Italy into the French state. Napoleon placed

his relatives or favorite generals at the head of other Italian states further down the peninsula. At the Congress of Vienna, the great powers reorganized the Italian north into the relatively large kingdoms of Lombardy and Venetia, among the richest and most strategically important areas of Italy. They were placed under Austrian domination, with the Habsburg emperor as their king, roughly parallel to the way that Alexander was made king of Poland. Taking up most of the middle half of the peninsula were the Papal States, and to their south was the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, headed by Ferdinand I, another Bourbon.

At this point, Italy, like Germany, was a nebulous linguistic and cultural notion. Few observers considered it feasible to unify the entire peninsula into a single Italian nation-state. Metternich had initially proposed to create a loose Italian confederation similar to the new German Confederation, but his proposal found little support, in part because there was already simmering resentment among Italians in northern Italy about having “foreigners” (Austrians) as their new rulers. Napoleon had treated them far better, many Italians observed, and, of course, given his Italian (Corsican) origin, he had been perceived as less foreign.

With the boundaries of central, eastern, and southern Europe redrawn, further territorial adjustments were devised with an eye to containing France. An expanded Netherlands and a new Piedmontese state, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, were installed on France’s northern and southeastern borders. These two areas were considered vulnerable corridors, where France’s natural frontiers were uncertain and through which the triumphant armies of the Revolution had marched in the previous two decades. Also on the north of France, adjoining the Netherlands, Prussia now acquired large portions along the east of the Rhine, so that Prussia, in origin an eastern-European power, ruled large areas bordering on the French province of Lorraine. Similarly, Austria, with its northern Italian holdings, bordered and buttressed the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia.

These territorial adjustments had important long-range implications. Prussia now loomed as a western as well as a central and eastern-European power, with the Kingdom of Prussia awkwardly divided by Hanover from its main, historic territories. Since Prussia had also gained land in northern Saxony, its expanded base put it in a position to preside over the creation of a modern German nation-state a half-century later. Piedmont-Sardinia would play a roughly comparable role in the unification of Italy.

France seemed effectively contained and in fact would be much less of an expansionist threat to its neighbors in the following century. In 1815, Russia, Prussia, and Austria emerged with significantly expanded territorial holdings in Europe. Britain did not, and did not much care to. From the early eighteenth century, its ruling house had had a complex historical connection with Hanover, sharing kings for much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but Britain was increasingly preoccupied with its sprawling colonial holdings, and had gradually become less interested in trying to add or defend territories on the Continent. Britain was moving away from Continental diplomatic entanglements, toward what its leaders would term “splendid isolation.” At the Congress of Vienna, Britain obtained what was most important to it: assurances about freedom of the seas and the end of the threat from France, both vital to continued British commercial expansion.

Accomplishments of the Congress: Short-Term, Long-Term

To what extent had peace and stability been assured by these laboriously negotiated settlements? That was the question. Judged in comparison with the record of Europe's other major postwar settlement, at Paris in 1919, the Congress of Vienna can be given a good grade. The nineteenth century was relatively peaceful, avoiding the hugely destructive general warfare that characterized the years 1792 to 1815. There were a number of brief and intense local wars in the nineteenth century, but they did not result in death and destruction on the scale of the revolutionary period, to say nothing of the far more catastrophic years from 1914 to 1945 (the Crimean War of 1853–6 is a partial exception, especially in terms of the tremendous death toll for the Russian army).

European leftists in the nineteenth century detested the Vienna settlement. They particularly resented the heavy hand of Metternich's rule, but, compared to the tyrannies of the first half of the twentieth century, the states of the century between 1815 and 1914 seem humane and civilized (at least within Europe – distinctly less so in Europe's colonies). Even in regard to the Jews, or to the issue of the slave trade in Africa, the record of the Congress of Vienna was more one of tolerant humanity than might be assumed. Jewish delegations from several German states journeyed to Vienna, hoping that the congress could be persuaded to retain the civil equality granted Jews during the period of French rule. Metternich and others in his camp were not unsympathetic. He expressed a concern that Jews not be persecuted or left unprotected from popular violence. Still, most of the conservative statesmen at Vienna were suspicious of anything so closely associated with French rule as giving civil equality to the Jews. In 1819, the so-called Hep-Hep riots against Jews broke out in Germany, but there was little damage and no lives lost. Encouraging racial or ethnic hatred was not something for which most of the statesmen at Vienna could be fairly charged – quite the opposite in the case of Metternich, since he associated such passions with a destructive nationalism, and he generally sought to quash mob actions of whatever sort.

Even many spokesmen for the left in the early nineteenth century retained reservations about granting civil equality to Jews. The anemic final resolutions of the Congress, in regard to both the status of Jews and the abolition of African slavery, were considered a major disappointment by Jewish leaders and by those opposed to slavery. The legal rights gained by Jews in the German and Italian states when occupied by revolutionary armies were curtailed in the years immediately following the Congress. From a traditional conservative Christian viewpoint, the notion of complete Jewish legal equality could hardly be received with much enthusiasm, especially if it implied such eventualities as Jews becoming teachers of Christian children in elementary schools, or Jews being in positions of authority over Christians in the military and in the courts of law. These were remote, barely conceivable prospects in 1815 but became more divisive issues as the century progressed.

Tsar Alexander, who ruled over by far the largest number of Jewish subjects in any country, initially made friendly overtures to them, apparently out of gratitude for the support the leaders of Russia's religious Jews had offered the tsar in opposition to Napoleon – who was considered a blasphemous enemy of religion by traditional Jews,

perhaps even more than by conservative Christians. Alexander granted Congress Poland a remarkably liberal constitution, especially notable since his subjects outside Poland continued to live under despotic tsarist rule, whereas in Poland Jews enjoyed civil rights, at least in a formal sense, comparable to those of Jews in France under its new constitution. Even in the later decades of the nineteenth century, when notoriously repressive special decrees were applied to the Jews living in the rest of the Russian Empire, Jews in Congress Poland retained their formal rights.

Nonetheless, Alexander's initial liberality, in regard to the Jews as well as to his Christian subjects in Poland, weakened over the next decade, in part because Russia's serf-owning and reactionary nobles were not comfortable with the idea of having a Polish liberal monarchy as a next-door neighbor. Metternich's mildly sympathetic attitudes to Jews also tended to sour in those years; he, like Russia's leaders, grew to consider as especially dangerous the newly prominent, secular, and left-leaning Jewish intellectuals, personified by the celebrated German-Jewish poet and political activist Heinrich Heine, whom Metternich found unbearably insolent. Still, Metternich long retained friendly contacts with the wealthy, conservative, and distinctly more respectful Jews, personified by the Rothschilds, upon whom he, as many other members of the nobility, relied for a number of important loans.

The Repressive Years in Britain

The political atmosphere of the years immediately following the Congress of Vienna remained fearful and repressive. Even British leaders for a while seemed in the grip of a dread verging on panic about the dangers of popular agitation. Periods following major wars are typically troubled by economic dislocations, and the years immediately following 1815 were no exception. In Britain, the landowning gentry in control of Parliament feared that the postwar availability of cheaper grain would ruin them, and so they passed laws that kept the price of wheat and other grains artificially high. Since high grain prices meant high bread prices, the Corn Laws of 1815 were resented by the common people as an example of how the owners of land, who controlled Parliament, protected their interests at the expense of the poor. Many urban employers shared the resentments of the poor, since higher bread prices resulted in pressure to raise wages. ("Corn" referred to all grain; "maize," or sometimes "Indian corn," was the British word for what Americans called corn.) These resentments fueled agitation in favor of reforming Parliament, putting an end to the large landowners' domination of it and opening the vote to a wider part of society.

The campaign in favor of parliamentary reform in the early nineteenth century was especially strenuous in the new factory towns, where remarkable increases in population had occurred. In Manchester, one of the most prominent of these new towns, around 80,000 protesters gathered at Saint Peter's Field in 1819 with a set of demands that would become central to British reform agitation for the next half-century. They included repeal of the Corn Laws, annual elections to Parliament, and universal male suffrage. Among the Manchester demonstrators were women and children, generally considered an indication of peaceful intent, but nonetheless the authorities reacted in a brutal fashion. Soldiers attacked and fired into the crowd, killing eleven and wounding hundreds.

Reformers were outraged, and their indignation increased when the government officially congratulated the soldiers. The event became known as the “Peterloo Massacre,” in sardonic allusion to the victory at Waterloo four years earlier. References to the massacre of women and children entered into the martyrology that became an important element of the speeches and broadsides of nineteenth-century reformist agitation. The government followed up by passing the Six Acts of 1819, a set of laws against subversive activity and blasphemous literature. For a while it seemed that the liberties in which the British took so much pride were seriously imperiled.

In the German states of these years, economic and political issues tended to fuse into nationalist agitation. The German wars of liberation had been accompanied by a growing clamor to rid German lands of French cultural influence. German national and anti-French feelings were especially strong at the universities, where students and professors acclaimed the German common people, especially the peasants, as the purest examples of the *Volk*. This elevation of those closest to the soil carried with it a scorn for the sophisticated internationalist nobility, portrayed as parasitical, “frenchified,” and un-German. While the gala balls in Vienna were underway in 1814–15, German students were founding activist associations, or *Burschenschaften* (“fellowships” or fraternities). Their members gathered in evening torch-lit rallies to listen to rousing speeches about Germanic virtues, to sing folk songs, and to dress up as peasants. In a few instances, they burned reactionary books, and, in a particularly notorious episode, a student assassinated a reactionary playwright believed to be spying on students.

Metternich’s Repressions

For Metternich, these were not acceptable developments, and he exploited the assassination to introduce stringent measures against the students. He convoked a conference of the largest German states at Carlsbad, in Bohemia, where a set of resolutions he had prepared were adopted and then later ratified at a regular meeting of the German Confederation. The Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, like the Six Acts following Peterloo, became powerful symbols of the struggle between government repression and liberal values, especially freedom of speech. The decrees dissolved the *Burschenschaften* and placed government agents at the universities, often sitting in on lectures and seminars.

In the following years, Metternich, reviled as the “policeman of Europe,” established an extensive network of spies and agents. He was, paradoxically, both a determined opponent of the ideals of the French Revolution and a typical representative of the frenchified ruling classes of the Old Regime. Well-educated and multilingual, elegant in manner, and remarkably lacking in self-doubt, Metternich believed European civilization could find lasting peace only if its traditional ruling orders were protected. In practice, that meant to him that the divisive, impossibly unrealistic notions of the liberals and nationalists had to be quashed. In 1792, at the age of nineteen, he and his family had been forced by the invading French armies to abandon their home in the Rhineland. He subsequently joined the diplomatic service of the Habsburgs. In representing their multinational empire, Metternich proceeded on the belief that nationalist ideas were poisonously disruptive and destructive to civil peace, inevitably leading to bloodshed.

He concluded that a Pandora's box of unending strife would be opened up by extending the franchise or by letting "subversive elements" publish their ideas freely.

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it would be difficult to argue that Metternich's apprehensions were entirely unjustified. Indeed, he could be described as prophetic in some regards, but nonetheless his repressive measures were ultimately futile; the forces for change, especially nationalism and liberalism, had an elemental power to them, one that no single individual could hope to reverse.

Further Reading

A dated but still useful classic account is Harold Nicholson's *The Congress of Vienna: A Study in Allied Unity: 1812–1822* (2001; 1st ed. 1946). More recent are Tim Chapman's *Congress of Vienna: Origins, Processes, and Results* (2000) and (alas much less readable) Henry Kissinger's *The World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1815–22* (2011).

See also the opening chapters of William Rubinstein's *Britain's Century: A Political and Social History, 1815–1905* (1998).

3 The Engines of Change

Europe's industrialization helped to move it to the forefront of the world's powers, just as differing rates of industrialization inside Europe tended to lift countries to the northwest, above all Britain, whereas the countries to the south and east generally lagged behind. The reasons for these differing rates of growth have been the source of much historical controversy, in part because industrialization not only solved problems but also created many new ones. The peculiar dynamism and creativity of Europe found expression in its population's ability to multiply the productivity of labor beyond anything previously accomplished in human history.

Conceptualizing Historical Change

The last two centuries of European history can be described as years of massive, ever-accelerating change. The nature of rapid change in history can be suggestively conceptualized by a comparison with changes in the world of nature. Over the centuries, the rocks, soil, and oceans may seem to change little. But volcanic eruptions and attendant earthquakes can suddenly transform everything, resulting in a dramatically new environment, a new physical world within a short period.

And so it has been with periods of rapid historical change. The period of the French Revolution might be compared to a volcanic eruption, with violent crowds and millions of armed men streaming out of France and across the Continent, clashing in titanic battles and leaving parts of Europe in smoking ruins and littered with graveyards. Some 5 million deaths were directly related to the Revolution and its wars, and of course the numbers of dead tell only a portion of the story of how the lives of millions were suddenly transformed in these years.

Still, for all the horrors associated with them, the brutal mobs and marching soldiers were not only destructive; just as new life miraculously emerges after the smoldering desolation of a volcanic eruption, so the French Revolution spread new ideas, introduced new institutions, and installed new leaders, all within a few decades and upon the shattered remnants of a previous world. Then, after 1815, political change seemed to decelerate; people calmed down, although also with the lingering apprehension that another revolutionary eruption might be near, rumblings of which could be detected in every part of Europe.

Catastrophes in the natural world have long had direct and palpable implications for human populations, in ways that scientists and scholars have only recently begun to appreciate more amply. In 1816, a volcanic eruption in southeast Asia, in present-day Indonesia, changed the climate as far away as western Europe, resulting in an unusually cold summer, crop failures, and finally famine in 1816–17, contributing to unrest in those years but interestingly not to a new wave of political revolution, most likely because revolutionary energies had been exhausted by then. A more striking example of nature playing a direct role in modern European history can be seen in the fungus that attacked the potato plant in the 1840s, contributing to years of starvation in Ireland and the exodus of a large part of the Irish population to the New World. Crop failures, which were common in Europe before the modern period, often resulted in population movements, with domino-like implications.

Spurts in population growth inevitably put stress on existing institutions, again with long-range implications beyond the immediately obvious. Political unrest tends to correlate with a younger population or a lowering average age; if the population grows rapidly (based on more children surviving to adulthood rather than more adults surviving into old age), and thus the number of young people rises in relation to the number of old, energetic and violent pursuit of change is more likely. Young people are also more willing to move, either internally from villages to cities or externally to other countries, and are both more willing and more able to adjust to new ways of doing things.

Nonetheless, the implications of population growth are surprisingly many-sided and do not easily fit into simple formulas of cause and effect. The unprecedented increase in the population of Ireland in the decades before the 1840s did not result in dynamism or revolution but rather in mass death and emigration, once the spread of the potato fungus had done its work. The tragedies associated with the Potato Famine contributed to an even deeper hatred by the Irish of British authorities, who were accused of a hardhearted response to the failures of the potato crop. A young population, then, can have contradictory implications for production, since such bulges in population can be an economic burden during the period that its members are infants and young children, but the bulge then contributes to a boom when those children grow into their productive years – and then again it becomes a burden when they grow old, especially if the birth rate following them declines significantly.

The Industrial Revolution and Its Preconditions

For all of the transforming power of political revolution, warfare, and population spurts, other kinds of transforming if less flashy forces in the nineteenth century may be considered ultimately even more destructive – and creative. What we now term the

industrial revolution was surely the most important of them. Again, that revolution reflected the uniqueness of modern European history and contributed powerfully to its successes – and failures. Roughly comparable to the dynamism of rival sovereign states, free-market industrial growth had in its inner logic a dynamism that pushed incessantly toward recklessness. It was a destructive creativity that, along with its triumphs and dazzling rewards, had an ominously ticking dark side – into the twenty-first century.

Those scholars who find the term “revolution” misleading point out that industrial change in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe was not sudden, certainly not in the ways that an earthquake or a political revolution are. Even to conceptualize industrial change as a discrete or detached entity tends to give a misleading impression, for “it” was rather a series of intricately related and gradual developments over many years, with roots traceable far into the European past. This revolution had no easily identifiable beginning and no discernible end. Economists and other scholars still differ on how best to define it, and new theories about the nature and origins of industrialization in Europe crop up with remarkable regularity.

It is thus not easy to state succinctly what were its essential qualities, but, formulated at the most abstract level, the industrial revolution can be defined as an unprecedented expansion of human productivity, making human labor more efficient than it had ever been. Before the late eighteenth century in Europe, the production of commodities (defined as useful material things fashioned by human beings) was the direct result of human labor and the associated labor of domesticated animals. From the earliest periods of history, human and animal labor had been enhanced by tools such as the scythe and the plow. Similarly, before industrialization, machines driven by wind or water contributed to the production of commodities, although this production, too, was necessarily directed by human labor. One reason that the word “revolution” became attractive, retrospectively, to describe the changes in the productivity of labor is that the output of certain commodities, textiles in particular, increased to an astonishing extent in the late eighteenth century; a range of other advances in productivity paralleled those, and an endless array ensued. The most fundamental aspect, then, of this new industrialization had to do with the rapid, seemingly limitless growth in the productivity of labor, using new technologies and new ways of organizing it, and involving new sources of power beyond wind, water, and the muscles of humans and domesticated animals.

In attempting to understand the origins of industrialization, one needs to appreciate the long and intricate process of historical preparation, linked to Europe’s peculiar geography. No single invention or set of liberating legislation can be seen as decisive; it was rather the way that such factors interacted that was significant. In a similar way, industrialization, although usually identified with such technological innovations as the internal combustion engine, railroads, cotton gins, and spinning jennies, is best conceptualized as based on a nexus of cultural factors that had to do with the distinctiveness of European character. That cultural uniqueness was especially prominent in northwestern Europe.

The British Model of Industrialization

In the northwestern part of Europe, Britain was the forerunner and thus worthy of special attention. Its palpable advantages were many, its geographical features among the most important of them. Britain is a relatively flat and fertile country, with a

temperate climate, surrounded by oceans, and traversed by many navigable rivers. Its coal and iron deposits were bountiful, at least once inventions had been perfected to extract them efficiently from underground deposits. Its coastline and ample waterways help to explain why Britain's commercial character dated back into the Middle Ages; by the late eighteenth century, it had established worldwide markets for the commodities that its new factories were producing in ever more remarkable quantities.

Britain's commercial past has been linked to the Protestant religion of its population, especially to the Protestant belief that success in the material world was a sign of divine favor, and that income was to be saved and invested in productive enterprise rather than squandered in consumption or in conspicuous display, as was typical of the aristocracy. The belief that Protestantism and capitalism were causally related is viewed with skepticism by scholars today, partly because Catholic capitalists on the Continent were also successful, if a bit later and less prominently. Similar debates have arisen about the role of Jewish religion in the even more remarkable success of Jewish capitalists in modern times. However, the Jewish population was extremely small in the northwestern areas where capitalism was initially most successful. Perhaps the safest generalization is that a commercial and urban past played a role, and at least some members of all three religious groups, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish, had such pasts.

In many historical accounts, one of the more frequently mentioned preconditions of industrialization in Britain has been an earlier "revolution" in agriculture. The term here also can be misleading, since this agricultural transformation was even more gradual than the later industrial one. Its legislative aspects involved the passage through Parliament of hundreds of "enclosure acts" that allowed for a more all-embracing claim to private ownership of the land by large landowners, the famous "squirearchy" that controlled Parliament after 1688 (the term "squire" referred at that time to a member of the landed gentry, or those just below the titled nobility).

The spirit behind the enclosure movement was "capitalistic" in the sense that those imbued with that spirit strived to find more efficient uses of the land by closer, more rigorous supervision of it, producing greater profits and thus more ample accumulation of capital for further investment. Termed "improving landlords" by their admirers, these large landowners introduced significant innovations in such matters as farm implements, fertilizers, and stock breeding. The many contemporary critics of the enclosure movement, however, denounced these landowners in much the same terms as later socialists would denounce factory owners – as greedy, rapacious, and heartless – because the enclosure of land involved abolishing the traditional claims to partial use of it by the common people in the villages. The enclosure acts over many decades brought an end to the open fields of premodern times, to the former right to gather fallen wood, and to the semicooperative or "feudal" methods of cultivation.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the ownership of land in this more private sense ("enclosed" by hedges or fences) became widespread and finally resulted in a concentration of large holdings in England that were more extensive and significant than in any other area of northwestern Europe. The former tradition-bound and relatively inefficient villagers were gradually replaced by more substantial, more competent, and more productive farmers, who rented plots of land from the squires and then hired agricultural laborers to work the land for wages.

The gain in agricultural productivity through this gradual process ultimately contributed to more abundant and cheaper food in Britain. It also meant that many rural inhabitants were eventually drawn away from the intricate, often non-monetary economic relationships of the past and integrated into a market system in which they were simply paid wages. In approximately the same years, Britain's population began to expand to an unprecedented extent. The implications of these changes for later industrialization were far-reaching: Already by the 1780s, more efficient managers, energized by market incentives, had access to a relatively mobile and more numerous working population, ready (or effectively obliged) to move to where they could find the best wages.

This process occurred earlier in Britain than anywhere else in Europe, with a particular spurt during the Napoleonic period. In a related way, before the industrial revolution, the British had already long been known as a "money-grubbing" people, unusually much attuned to rational calculations of profit and loss on the market. The transition from the premodern "Jolly Old England" of traditional, personalized relationships to a modern, more impersonal and efficient world was by no means complete even by the end of the nineteenth century, but Britain was generally ahead of other countries in these modernizing trends by the late eighteenth century.

Industrialization in Other Countries

Revealing contrasts can be seen in considering Spain and Italy in these years, especially their southern regions, since both agricultural innovation and industrialization came much later to them. Although both had the advantage of long coastlines, there were relatively few navigable rivers, and large areas of the mountainous interior of both countries were not easily accessible. Much of the land, too, was arid; the soil was rocky and relatively lacking in fertility; the deposits of coal and iron were meager. A large proportion of the populations of Spain and Italy consisted of a desperately impoverished traditional peasantry. The upper and middle classes were relatively little touched by the world of commerce; there were many fewer urban areas and thus a relatively small urban middle class. (Some important exceptions to these generalizations need to be recognized. Active urban life and entrepreneurial populations existed in Catalonia, on Spain's northeastern coast, and in such northern cities of Italy as Genoa, Milan, Turin, and Venice.)

Britain was also more politically and institutionally unified than were Spain and Italy at this time; for all its conspicuous varieties of local culture and speech, Britain was ruled by a single monarch, a single parliament, and a single legal system. Its population used a single currency, internal trade did not face significant customs barriers, and banking institutions were being fashioned that allowed for a relatively smooth flow of capital. The growing numbers of British workers who were not strongly tied to the land or under the control of village authorities moved to new areas of employment, and the burgeoning industrial areas were hiring at salaries that were often attractive to people facing deteriorating conditions in the villages.

France offers another kind of revealing contrast to Britain. Blessed with a rich diversity of climates and soils, in 1815 *la grande nation* had a population that was

roughly three times greater than Britain's. Spaniards were known to refer enviously to France as a garden, a place of unusual natural wealth, beauty, and splendor. To live "like God in France" was a common colloquial expression for living well. Yet, for all of its natural wealth, France was slow to industrialize compared to Britain; the stage of industrial productivity reached by Britain by the late eighteenth century was not reached by France for another fifty years or more.

The reasons for this relative slowness were several. France in 1815 was of course a defeated and occupied country, whereas Britain was a victorious one, having suffered no battles on its territory and having retained mastery of the seas. France's revolutionary chaos, its expenditures in warfare, its massive loss of men in their most productive years, and the diversion of its available capital resources from industry to warfare provide part of the explanation for the country's slow development, but only part. France pillaged much of Europe during Napoleon's rule, but those gains were less often put into productive investments than were the accumulated capital resources in Britain. After Napoleon's Hundred Days, France was required to pay an indemnity of 700 million francs, further diminishing the funds available in the country for domestic investment. As noted in Chapter 1, the French economy eventually did benefit from the legal and institutional reforms of the Revolution, clearing away the institutional clutter and economically irrational privileges of the Old Regime. The country had also acquired a standardized currency and a metric system, had done away with internal tariffs, and had established a centralized national government and banking institutions. But these reforms were not enough to tip the balance, especially since it took quite some time for them to be put effectively in operation.

France's historically entrenched class structure and national character also tended to pose obstacles to rapid industrialization. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, the country's rural lower classes, or peasantry, remained a much larger percentage of the population than was the case in Britain. France's peasantry was also more traditional, more solidly tied to the land, and less drawn to production for the market. The middle ranks of French society, or bourgeoisie, included industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, some of whom resembled the British capitalists in plowing their profits back into business expansion and innovation, but there was nonetheless a marked tendency among this element in France to divert its profits to the acquisition of prestigious estates, and more generally to squander its money trying to "live nobly," to attain higher social status, and to shake off the stain of its humble origins.

Since Marxists later tended to use the terms "bourgeoisie" and "capitalist" interchangeably, it is worth repeating the point made in Chapter 2, that the French bourgeoisie at this time and in centuries past was an amorphous entity, less a distinct social class with a common identity, interests, or political agenda than a broad and variegated segment of property-owning urban dwellers, situated above the manual laborers and below the nobility, but still divided internally, at times sharply. The term "bourgeoisie" derives from the French *bourg*, an old term for the fortress town of the Middle Ages. In turn, the French term is related to the English "burg." Thus, "burgher" and "bourgeois" are English and French varieties of an old word for town-dweller (Italian *borghese*, German *Bürger*). But, to repeat, these town-dwellers were by the nineteenth century less than a unified entity.

By the late eighteenth century, many subtle gradations within the French bourgeoisie were recognized. Among those usually termed bourgeois were many who had little in common with modern capitalists in lifestyle and mentality; the poorest elements of the bourgeoisie tended to regard the owners of significant amounts of capital as threats to their wellbeing. Such was especially the case with the *petite* (small) *bourgeoisie*, whose numerous ranks included shopkeepers, independent artisans, and minor officials. Those peasants who owned a small plot of land were also sometimes termed *petits bourgeois*, in spite of their living in agricultural villages rather than towns.

At the tip of the bourgeois social pyramid was the *grande bourgeoisie*, financial magnates and highly successful entrepreneurs, some of whom had accrued more wealth than most of the titled nobility. Below the *grande bourgeoisie* came the *haute* (high, upper) *bourgeoisie*, composed of substantial businessmen, professionals, and higher bureaucrats. This segment of the French bourgeoisie has often been considered its most influential element. And in between the *haute* and *petite bourgeoisie* was the *bourgeoisie moyenne* (middle).

The point of dwelling on this somewhat arbitrary and intricate nomenclature, aside from the fact that it was much used in the nineteenth century, is that in France such social categories tended to be more prominent and enduring than in Britain, just as French society itself was less fluid, its economy less dynamic, the growth of its population slower, and the overall structural changes it experienced in the nineteenth century less far reaching. The differences between the two countries were important but not stark; in Britain's ruling elites, class distinctions and snobbery retained in some cases a near-fetishistic character, but on balance the growing ranks of the upwardly mobile, energetic businessman in Britain in the nineteenth gradually became more of an emerging social model than in France; the values of the business world eventually became accepted in Britain as something to be emulated by the rest of society. Ultimately, that difference probably best explains the differences in the growth of productivity in the two nations, and of course also suggests some crucial differences in their national identity, in both its origins and evolution in the nineteenth century.

France's rigid class structure in the nineteenth century, particularly its relatively large population of independent peasants, artisans, and shopkeepers, had an influence on another trend of considerable importance: France's total population began to level off, to an important degree because its peasants were limiting the size of their families. Thus, by the eve of World War I, the British, with a population of 36 million, had almost caught up with the French, whose population had grown only to 39 million. In some ways more impressive than the British growth – and a rising concern to both France and Britain – was the growth of the population of the new German Reich, formed in 1871, which had reached 65 million by 1914.

Most of the rest of Europe's nations and regions in the first half of the nineteenth century fell somewhere below Britain and France in industrial productivity and overall wealth but still above the southern regions of Spain and Italy. Each country had its own special mix of the above-discussed traits, with much regional variation. Belgium, with a population of 4 million in 1831, when it became independent from the Netherlands, rivaled Britain as a business-oriented country. The "Yankees" of North America, mostly British in origin, would soon match and then surpass the British in their reputation as dogged competitors in the scramble for profits, as indeed would the Germans by the end of the century.

Resistance to Industrialization

Eventually all of Europe would feel powerful pressures to emulate Britain. However, partly because of industrialization's gradual and many-sided nature, many of those who observed it in its initial stages were strongly impressed, if not outraged, by its human and environmental costs. Few sensed at that point how profoundly industrialization's enhancement of productivity would eventually transform Europe as a whole. In fact, many observers initially thought of the new industrial developments as unwelcome, mostly destructive byproducts of unbridled greed, benefiting only the capitalists. Railroad engines were denounced as noisy, smoke-belching monstrosities, polluting the air and rudely violating the tranquility of country life. The first factories were perceived in even more negative ways – “satanic mills” was a common epithet. And the entrepreneurial spirit of the first capitalists was widely considered repellent if not downright immoral, driven by a near-criminal lust for individual profit, unconcerned with its consequences for the rest of society.

However, those who concluded that the application of industrial techniques was primarily positive in effect steadily grew in number and influence over the course of the century. There was a more enduring dissent about how much the state should attempt to interfere with or manage the new industrial economy, and various anti-industrial and anticapitalist movements arose, but for the most part the legislation passed in the course of the century, especially in Britain, had the purpose of encouraging and fine-tuning capitalism rather than limiting or abolishing it.

Technological Innovation and Industrialization

Technological innovation is one of the most familiar themes in the standard narratives of the industrial revolution, and with good reason, although the role of technology has at times been exaggerated in comparison to the broader historical and cultural setting. In other words, people had to be ready to use the new technologies, and at first many were decidedly not ready, especially in remote, primarily agricultural areas. It is also not quite accurate to see such famous inventions as the spinning jenny (see Figure 3.1), the water frame, or even the first steam engines as products of “modern science,” since most of the key inventions were made by men without higher education who were more akin to handymen than to laboratory-based scientists on the cutting edge of research. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, in what has been called the second industrial revolution, science in a more rigorous sense began to play a prominent role in such fields as chemicals and electricity, but in the first stages such was not usually the case.

However, most of the early inventors and industrialists had some education and only a few came from the lower ranks of society. The common phrase of the day, “rags to riches,” for describing the prosperous businessman, overstated the matter substantially, since most of the first successful industrialists came from the middle and lower-middle ranks of society. Since most initially lacked significant savings, loans from banks were in many cases important to their success, but capital rapidly accumulated



Figure 3.1 Woman using spinning jenny, invented by James Hargreaves in 1764. Wood engraving, c. 1880. *Source:* Universal History Archive/Getty Images.

from profits was also common. At any rate, the entrepreneurial individualism of these early industrialists, which came to be so lauded and idealized, was somewhat less bold than often believed. Compared to the mentality of a traditional peasant, it was real enough, but these individualists depended crucially on a dense network of legal reforms and social institutions that had little to do with their personal efforts. Men with skills like those of Watt or Arkwright (discussed below) would have been utterly stymied in southern Italy or Spain. Indeed, even if they had been able to take their inventions with them to such areas, their enterprises would almost certainly have languished, since any number of crucial prerequisites for success would still have been lacking, among them markets or effective demand (people willing and able to buy), a mobile labor force, a legal framework, a transportation infrastructure, and access to liquid capital.

Cotton textiles were the crucial product of this first stage. Production of them in Britain soared, especially between the 1780s and 1820s. The demand for them, as their price steadily declined, seemed boundless, opening up alluring vistas of profit for those ready and able to seize opportunities. In Britain there were many such people – inventive, ingenious, attuned to making money on the market, willing to take risk, and creatively and persistently dealing with each obstacle and bottleneck in the production process.

The technical details of the rise of the cotton industry are not easily summarized and often arcane, but in general one invention or innovation tended to stimulate others, with inevitable false starts and recurring periods of adjustment to solve various practical or technical problems. Already by the early part of the eighteenth century, significant improvements in hand-loom weaving were being introduced; in Britain the “flying shuttle” nearly doubled textile production by mid-century. That led to a sharp increase in the demand for yarn, which in turn worked to inspire two other famous inventions, the spinning jenny and then the water frame, which amply answered the demand. In the 1780s, Richard Arkwright, the celebrated inventor of the water frame, adapted a steam engine to drive the new spinning machinery, which had previously been driven by water power (thus the term “water frame”). Partly because of the bulk and noise of the new devices, but also because of the need to supervise production more closely, Arkwright moved workers, spinning machinery, and steam engines into large buildings – the “satanic mills” (later termed “factories” in the United States). On a symbolic level, one might appropriately observe that the appearance of such large units of production marked a new stage of history, although small workshops remained the prevalent element of Britain’s industrial scene for many years.

Each of these changes had its seemingly inevitable human cost. For a while, the spurt in the productivity of spinning tended to overwhelm the ability of the hand-loom weavers, working mostly from their homes, to absorb it; their numbers increased for a short time, but before long a power loom was invented to meet the demand, with the long-range result that both spinning and weaving were moved into the mills and the hand-loom weavers could no longer compete. Cotton textiles were by the early nineteenth century being produced in quantities and with an efficiency that would have been scarcely imaginable a half-century earlier. Other bottlenecks were attended to, in particular in the production of raw cotton, vast amounts of which initially came from India. The steadily rising demand for it was to some degree satisfied by the invention of the cotton gin, (patented in 1793) by the American Eli Whitney, which speeded up the previously time-consuming task of removing the seeds from the cotton. The role played by Whitney and the importance of the production of cotton in the United States underlines an easily overlooked point: Britain’s industrial revolution depended on factors outside Britain and outside Europe, in terms both of raw materials and of the markets for the finished products.

Although the first stages of the industrial revolution were associated particularly with textiles, in other areas, too, the application of new technologies, new power sources, and rationalized production had powerful, many-faceted repercussions. The use of steam engines in the mills was an example of how inventions in one area of production often proved useful in completely different areas: Experiments with steam power dated back to the seventeenth century, and by the early 1800s steam engines were being used to pump water out of coal mines. In 1763, James Watt introduced improvements on the relatively primitive engines in operation up to that point. Watt was a technician at the University of Glasgow, thus qualifying, more than other early inventors, as a scientist, but more crucial to his eventual success than his technical inventiveness was the business partnership he formed with Matthew Boulton, an

already successful manufacturer of toys and articles of clothing. Without that partnership, Watt might well have been stymied, since the capital outlay necessary of his inventions were considerable compared to those of, say, Arkwright or Whitney. By the end of the eighteenth century, the firm of Boulton and Watt was experiencing solid success; their steam engines were widely adopted both in Britain and in other countries. Their story would be replicated in many other sectors of the economy.

The use of steam engines for transport in particular had important long-range implications, both on water and on land. Again, the process was gradual, starting with their use in mines. The first reasonably safe and in other regards satisfactory “locomotive” in the open country was the *Rocket*, which in 1829 achieved the then breathtaking speed of sixteen miles an hour, on rails newly laid between Liverpool and Manchester. Within about a decade, railroad construction was proceeding full steam ahead, as it were, in Britain and the United States, which were soon followed by various Continental nations.

The Implications of Industrial Change

The title of this chapter, “The Engines of Change,” was chosen in part to evoke images of these engines, or locomotives (a word that first appeared in the late eighteenth century, sounding as if it had to do with an insane speed, though it was coined from the Latin words *loco*, a place or spot, and *motivus*, causing motion). The details of the methods of production were often technical, the overall picture hard to grasp. Contemporaries often felt confused and overwhelmed by a sense that some inscrutable demonic process had been unleashed, with similarities to what some felt about the “genie of revolution” that had been released in France in 1789.

A key point is that these changes in methods of production had profound, if not always immediately obvious, social and intellectual implications. A pertinent example is slavery in the United States, which, because of the increase in demand for cotton in the British textile industries, became highly profitable – and thus more difficult to abolish. A strong British navy, always important to protect British commercial interests, now became even more vital. Workers in Britain found new kinds of employment, and many industrializing areas grew with a speed that put tremendous stress on municipal structures as well as political structures of the nation as a whole.

Not long after the Congress of Vienna, cotton textiles constituted almost half of British exports, and growing British prominence in a range of areas allowed the country’s leaders to claim plausibly that it was becoming “the workshop of the world,” a benefit to all mankind. It was, similarly, a challenge to the rest of the world, as that world came to comprehend the military power that Britain’s soaring industrial productivity brought with it. Many were decidedly unenthusiastic about following Britain’s path and grasped for alternatives, much as many were passionately debating the significance of the revolution in France. Everywhere efforts were being made to conceptualize, to give broader meaning to what one historian (Eric Hobsbawm) has termed the “dual revolution,” political and economic, of France and Britain. To those efforts we need now turn.

Further Reading

Two previously mentioned works devote much attention to European industrialization: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848* (1996), and David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (1969). Further accounts can be found in Clive Trebilcock, *The Industrialization of the Continental Powers, 1780–1914* (1983); Rondo Cameron, *A Concise Economic History of the World* (2002); and Sidney Pollard, *The Integration of the European Economy since 1815* (2006).

4 The Seedtime of Ideology

A Century of “Questions”

In early nineteenth-century Europe, new ideological terms, later informally referred to as “isms,” proliferated like rabbits; by the second half of the century there were so many that even a bare listing of them would easily fill a page. “Ideology” was itself a new word, first appearing in French (*idéologie*) in the 1790s. The existing term, “worldview,” was another way of referring to much the same notion. From the mid-nineteenth century, the German term for worldview (*Weltanschauung*) entered English usage, adding a nuance of philosophical profundity.

The purpose of these terms, or why they appeared in such profusion in such a short period, is not entirely clear. Similarly uncertain is what they at first signified to various elements of the population. Did the new isms serve as a secular replacement for religion? Were they a guide to action, a means of rendering the blur of rapidly changing reality somewhat clearer and more coherent? Or, in contrast, can they be dismissed as efforts to manipulate how the general population perceived that changing reality, to rationalize and excuse narrow, class-based interests?

The answer to these questions may be “all of the above.” At any rate, the generalizing content of the new isms was not absolutely new; comparable abstractions and non-religious generalizations about the human condition can be traced back to the time of Plato and Aristotle. Similarly, not all the newly proliferating isms qualified as full-blown worldviews. Still, the early nineteenth century witnessed a distinctive taste for wide-ranging ideological rumination, associated with the growing consensus that a new, endlessly promising – or profoundly threatening – world was emerging in Europe. It is a further sign of Europe’s rising prestige and influence that these newly coined isms spread to the four corners of the earth in the following two centuries. Many if not most are still with us, though with ever-evolving, sometimes contradictory meanings.

Europe's Major "Questions" and Its Belief in Progress

Closely associated with the emergence of the isms were the often passionate debates in Europe surrounding a range of specifically modern problems or "questions." There was some arbitrariness to how an issue became widely recognized as a formal "Question" with a capital letter, but the following were among the most important: the Social Question (touching on such new ideologies as socialism and capitalism), the Woman Question (feminism, the changing status of women), the Irish Question (nationalism, racism, imperialism), the Jewish Question (antisemitism, Zionism), the German Question (nationalism, racism), and the Eastern Question (having to do with the fate of the Ottoman Empire, especially in the Balkans and Middle East).

Most of these questions also had obvious roots in the past, but there was now a significant novelty to them: People in Europe had begun to believe that there were reasonable, proximate, and definitive solutions to these questions, whereas in the past the tendency had been to regard, say, poverty as an aspect of an inherently imperfect human condition, or to consider the subordination of women as divinely decreed and not to be altered. The growing belief in the possibility of solutions was in turn associated with a rising respect for the power of reason and the scientific method. There developed a confidence that virtually unlimited human progress was possible (and there grew a related confidence in Europe's superiority to the rest of the world); society could be incomparably more productive, more just, and more free than it had ever been in the past. (The Eastern Question fits these generalizations insofar as it had to do with the rapid rise of European power and the decline of the Ottoman Empire; the expansion of the Russian Empire into the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere was widely feared by other European nations in the nineteenth century, even though by the century's end Russia was proving to be another kind of "sick man," to be torn to pieces by World War I).

This expanding belief in progress and human perfection met substantial and lasting objections. The horrors of the French Revolution were close in memory, and industrialization was still viewed in predominantly negative terms by many. A lasting theme in nineteenth-century art and literature, one that fascinated Europe's educated population, built upon the legend of Faust, a tragic figure who, in a bargain with the Devil, gave up his soul for god-like knowledge and eternal youth. Another ancient tale that found renewed interest was that of Prometheus, who had revealed the secret of fire to mortals and was punished by Zeus by being chained to a rock and eternally tormented by an eagle that returned each day to tear at his innards. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, published in 1818, when she was eighteen years old, touched on similar themes, as did the tales among the Jews of the Golem, a clay monster brought to life. All of these had interesting connections to ancient Greek notions of *hubris* (excessive pride), calling forth *nemesis* (retributive punishment).

The Elusive Genesis and Evolution of Europe's Isms

The isms assumed their nineteenth-century shape out of an intricate process of ideological debate, and are best approached not as isolated or entirely coherent entities but rather as initially diffuse and inchoate, taking form in dynamic interplay with one another over time. The ideologists of the left were challenged by those of the right; those

who believed in reason and progress were attacked by those who distrusted reason and harbored no hopes for ultimate human perfection. Competing ideologists borrowed elements from one another, often using the same words but with substantially different connotations. Few on the right, for example, actually announced that they were against liberty or justice, but what they meant in using such terms was different from what those on the left understood when using them. These shifting mixes and amalgams continue to this day, making it all the more difficult to understand what was meant by various isms when they were first coined, but in most instances their meanings (and especially their connotations) have changed remarkably by the twenty-first century.

New words catch on when there is a broadly felt need for them. The exact nature of such needs is often not clear, but in the case of the isms it seems obvious that, while powerful new forces and disruptive developments were everywhere in evidence, their ultimate meaning for the future was uncertain. In light of that reigning uncertainty, contemporaries felt the need to coin words for these developments, as part of an effort to come to grips with them or “conceptualize” (yet another new word) them. To a degree that also meant demystifying them.

The critical work of twentieth-century scholars has done much to undermine easy assumptions about the appeal of these ideologies. For example, the correlations of social class and ideology that Marx and many other nineteenth-century thinkers considered axiomatic are no longer widely seen as such. It seemed entirely obvious in the nineteenth century that the poor would be attracted to ideologies promising them a better material life, as, for example, socialism did. Entrepreneurs, similarly, would logically have been attracted to an ideology that promised to liberate them from governmental restrictions, as liberalism did.

Unquestionably, raw self-interest, especially economic interest, played an important role in ideological preferences – and still does – but scholars have been impressed with an array of complicating factors, key among them the difficulty of defining, or even understanding, what a given person’s self-interest actually is. “Irrational” factors typically come into play in ideological preference; the earlier assumption that most individuals would be able to arrive at informed decisions about their true interests must be considered seriously flawed, in part because people define their interests in endlessly subtle, unpredictable, and even self-destructive ways.

Class identity also turns out to be a frustratingly imperfect guide to why ideologies were embraced in the nineteenth century, in no small part because of the additional difficulty of defining social class. The revolutionary mystique, as discussed in Chapter 1, exercised powerful supra-class appeals; selfless individuals from all classes were drawn to it, as were the emotionally unstable and those hungry for power. Religious beliefs often worked against rational calculations of self-interest or the interests of one’s class. In short, although we can certainly make useful generalizations about the ideological identities that Europeans were assuming, we need to be continually alert to the dangers of oversimplification, related to the mysteries of the human psyche.

Conservatism, Liberalism, Socialism

Some of the isms that appeared in the early nineteenth century have sunk entirely from view by the early twenty-first century, and most of those that have survived have evolved to the point that mere traces of their original meanings remain. Three have an especially significant

history: conservatism, liberalism, and socialism. Conservatism (and rule by conservatives) was prevalent in the first half of the century, especially in the decade or so following 1815. Conservatives were challenged with growing boldness by liberals in these decades, and liberalism then reached its zenith in the two to three decades following 1848. Highly diverse strands of socialist theory emerged in the early nineteenth century, but socialism generally remained a fringe ideology until the last decades of the nineteenth century.

These three ideologies were under constant construction and modification in the nineteenth century; the lines that divided them remained indistinct, their tenets overlapped, and their national variations were numerous. Any overview of them unavoidably gives an impression of greater clarity and coherence than was obvious to contemporary observers. Still, it can be said that each of the three retained distinct visions of the Highest Good and of the most pressing evils (or the Enemy) of the day.

Liberalism is often considered the most characteristic ideology of the nineteenth century, and, more broadly, of modern European history. Liberals maintained that human beings are best off – the individual human personality most able to achieve its highest potential – when as free as possible. The English word “liberal” ultimately derives from the Latin word for “free,” *liber*. The liberals’ Highest Good, then, was freedom for the individual. The face of the Enemy could be seen in those who tried to repress individual freedom. Conservatives, in contrast, harbored large reservations about the effects of individual liberty; they believed that human beings, especially the lower orders, are best off when guided and sheltered by religion, authority, and tradition; without such guidance, liberty was positively dangerous, and “free” people inevitably stumbled and fell. The conservatives’ Highest Good had to do with stability, security, and order. They believed that traditional political authority and social structures were divinely sanctioned and that free individuals were fatally inclined to sin, undermining social cohesiveness. The Enemy for conservatives were those harboring naive, dangerous hopes about what freedom, based on unaided reason, could accomplish (unaided, that is, by Revelation or tradition).

The socialists attacked both liberals and conservatives. Their most fundamental belief was that human beings are best off when firmly bound together in harmonious union, which most socialists believed was only possible in the context of substantial social and economic equality. Their Highest Good had to do with harmony and cooperation, and they defined the Enemy as those who violated or disrupted fraternal feelings, either by misusing freedom, as they believed the liberals did, or by abusing authority, as they believed the conservatives did.

Conservatism might be considered the most elemental of the three, the ideology with the strongest claims to a long and distinguished lineage. Respect for tradition (*conserving* it) and the belief that social hierarchies are divinely sanctioned can be traced far back into European history. In fact, nearly all human societies up to modern times have been staunchly conservative in this sense. The European rural lower orders revered tradition no less, and possibly more, than the nobility, royalty, and Church authorities did. Conservatives in power, such as Metternich, believed that social stability inevitably required the application of physical force by ruling authorities, given the inherent sinfulness of humanity. One conservative theorist, Joseph de Maistre, notoriously quipped that fear of the hangman was the foundation of any properly functioning society.

The more extreme conservatives, such as the Ultras in Restoration France, were often termed “reactionaries,” another new word, first used to describe those reacting against

the violent excesses of the Terror in 1794; it thereafter acquired mostly negative connotations as used by liberal critics of the right. The reactionary Ultras in France hoped to undo the reforms of the Revolution and restore the Old Regime. Many in their ranks yearned for a return to an even more distant (and idealized) past. Metternich's liberal opponents often denounced him as a reactionary, but a more accurate term for him was simply conservative, since he accepted that at least some of the recent past had to be conserved, in the name of realism and stability, even if that past had involved rapid revolutionary change.

Edmund Burke: The Conservative Tradition and Its Opponents

Conservatism's most influential theoretical expression dated to a quarter-century before the time that the term itself gained currency. Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in 1790, predicted with remarkable prescience the horrors to come. His writings attracted special attention because of the penetrating way that he described a rationalism gone wild in France – the belief by revolutionaries that they could simply abolish, within the span of a year, institutions laboriously built up over hundreds and thousands of years. Their untested ideas then proved to be unworkable, often catastrophically so. Burke's defense of the social utility of privilege and tradition was characterized by an unusual sophistication, one that continued to impress generation after generation of conservatives.

Burke was sixty-one years old when he composed his *Reflections*, toward the end of a long and active career. His political position was characteristically English, thus not particularly close to the positions of Metternich and the conservative theorists on the Continent a generation later, even if they did praise him profusely. Burke had earlier expressed sympathy for the revolutionaries in Britain's American colonies; his record up to 1790 might even have been considered liberal, at least in the respect he showed for the traditional liberties of the upper orders in opposition to royal power. His description of state and society as comparable to a complex, living organism was by no means original, but, again, he made the case with unusual subtlety. Perhaps most crucially, he persuasively identified the Enemy for conservatives: the terrible simplifiers who enticed "the swinish multitudes" (Burke's words) away from their divinely sanctioned natural leaders – toward chaos and self-destruction.

One of the many signs of the importance of Burke's *Reflections* was the number of critical responses it elicited almost immediately. Thomas Paine had become a comparably famous figure, but on the left, and in 1791 his *The Rights of Man*, a blistering attack on the Old Regime, appeared. He charged that corruption, inefficiency, and cruelty, not wisdom and social responsibility, were the main products of the tradition and privilege that Burke so lauded. Paine's arguments were also not novel; his importance had more to do with the clarity and effectiveness of his prose, linked to his preexisting fame by the early 1790s. Indeed, *The Rights of Man* rehearsed many of the arguments in Paine's even more famous pamphlet of 1776, *Common Sense*, a defense of Enlightened reason. He had been one of the American Revolution's best-known and most effective defenders – ironically, along with Burke – before the two men parted company over the French Revolution.

Feminism and the Woman Question

Another figure who eloquently expressed an anti-Burkean point of view at this time, Mary Wollstonecraft, later became an icon for feminists. She was so enthusiastic about the outbreak of revolution in 1789 that she decided to travel to France to observe it with her own eyes. Not everything she saw there pleased her, however, as was evident in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). She was deeply disappointed that the rights of “man” to liberty and legal equality were denied to women by the French revolutionaries. Similarly disappointed was the French author and political activist Olympia de Gouges, who published *A Declaration of the Rights of Women* in 1791. She would perish in the reaction to the Terror, as would other women activists who were tainted by association with the more extreme factions of the Jacobins.

Wollstonecraft and de Gouges attracted only a small following during their lifetimes, but their ideas continued to reverberate in the following centuries. Part of the reason that these early feminists retained a readership and continued to find new ones is that they posed fundamental questions about the human condition, and did so in ways that exposed serious problems with all three main isms. Their writings unveiled some particularly awkward contradictions in liberalism, since many if not most liberals, in spite of their assumed universalism, were in fact speaking only about “man” and not all of humanity when proclaiming the value of liberty. The majority of early liberals doubted women’s inherent mental abilities, and even more their emotional stability, and thus the fitness of women for civil equality and modern freedom. The reasoning behind such doubts had to do with women’s alleged physical and psychic frailty; because of such inherent weaknesses, it was thought that women should remain dependent on men for protection and guidance. To grant them the same freedom granted to men would be as mistaken as to grant it to children. For such reasons, women who embraced feminist ideas often moved from an initial interest in individualistic liberalism toward socialism, where feminism found at least a somewhat more sympathetic hearing.

Socialist activists and theorists at this point were heterogeneous, but they tended to agree with early feminists in some crucial regards. Early socialists and early feminists generally defined themselves in opposition to liberalism, particularly to the liberals’ (and the bourgeoisie’s) hypocrisies and egoistic individualism. Socialists rejected the way that liberals defined freedom and equality, since in practice those definitions left out the overwhelming majority of the adult male population as well as all females. The socialist critique of liberal elitism especially focused on the implications of the existing unequal distribution of private property. A common theme in socialist literature was that extreme inequality of wealth and property ownership corrupted the human spirit by undermining the sense of human solidarity and legitimizing exploitation.

Charles Fourier, one of the most influential of the early socialists in France, declared himself a radical feminist. He rejected patriarchy and the existing bourgeois family – with breath-taking audacity. He described the position of women in the society around him as scarcely better than that of slaves, adding that the worth of any civilization could be measured by the extent to which it had remedied the traditional subjugation of women. But Fourier’s definition of freedom was unusual, to say the least, and the equality he defended had to do with human rights and dignity, not physical or intellectual

abilities. Aside from their obvious physical differences, women were, he declared, profoundly different in their emotional and spiritual natures. He argued that women could only be “free” if their essentially different characters were allowed to be expressed without the taboos and confinements of traditional Christian morality. Rarely has *vive la difference!* achieved such a breathtakingly consistent expression, especially in terms of recognizing female sexuality, as further explained below.

The Evolution of Liberal Theory and Practice: Radicalism and Utilitarianism

Although liberal theory by the 1820s and 1830s had developed into a more sophisticated and integrated body of thought than feminism or socialism, it still encompassed a range of distinct positions. The main energies of liberals in those years focused on political reform in opposition to post-1815 reaction. However, as socialism began to gain greater following by mid-century, and as lower-class agitation began to gather force, liberal ideas also took on more explicitly antisocialist dimensions. Fourier's ideas thoroughly shocked most members of the middle class who learned of them, and not only on issues of gender; his belief that private property and the free-market economy should be abolished were deeply alarming to property-holding, entrepreneurial citizens.

Still, on the left fringe of liberalism, significant overlaps with socialism persisted. Such was the case, for example, with the Philosophical Radicals in Britain, a celebrated intellectual elite whose name derived from their claim that they were applying reason to human nature at its very roots (“root” in Latin is *radix*, thus the word “radical”). The term “radicalism” came to be used widely in the nineteenth century, suggesting an inclination to push liberal-rationalist ideas to their logical extremes but more concretely referring to the individualist-egalitarian but non-socialist left of liberalism, as in the term “democratic radicalism.” (The French word *radical* came to be closely associated with the Jacobin tradition in France.) Disillusioned radicals, like disillusioned feminists, did often collaborate with various kinds of socialists in their quest for what seemed to them more consistent, less hypocritical forms of liberty, equality, and fraternity, but their emphasis remained more individualistic and more attached to private ownership, at least that of small holders of property.

For much of the later 1790s and the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Philosophical Radicals avoided a close identification with Paine or the French Revolution, largely because of Britain's long and bitter conflict with Napoleonic France. Nonetheless, the ideas of the Philosophical Radicals were based on Enlightened principles, British rather than French in flavor but still with a parallel respect for the ability of human reason to reform society in far-reaching ways. Their most influential guide was Jeremy Bentham, a remarkably prolific author who argued for radical reforms in all branches of British life, providing exhaustive detail on how it all should be accomplished.

Bentham's writings were the source of a number of familiar set phrases of the nineteenth century, such as “the greatest good for the greatest number” and “let the punishment fit the crime.” These had special connotations during his lifetime, since many believed that the British government was in the hands of a parasitical aristocracy and that cruelly disproportionate punishments were often prescribed for trivial crimes,

such as the death penalty for pickpockets. Bentham argued that laws should be not evaluated on how long they had existed – Burke’s “wisdom of the ages” – but rather on how efficiently and fairly they served society; in short, on their social utility (thus “Utilitarianism,” an alternative term for Philosophical Radicalism). He concluded that many of Britain’s laws did a miserable job in that regard.

Classical Liberalism

Bentham’s Utilitarian critique of Britain’s existing state, society, and economy had a large influence on what eventually came to be known as Classical Liberalism. Since Britain by the second half of the century was the country where liberalism was the most successful, a model for liberals on the Continent, the prominence of British thinkers in formulating liberal theory was only natural. Another celebrated eighteenth-century thinker, Adam Smith, had earlier supplied a key component of the Classical Liberal synthesis in his arguments favoring free-market economics, often referred to as *laissez-faire* (French for “let do,” meaning let entrepreneurs be free from government interference). Smith’s widely read work *On the Wealth of Nations* (1776), was then built upon by other nineteenth-century liberal economists in many countries.

Liberalism gradually evolved into a multifaceted, finely tuned ideology of freedom (economic, political, and intellectual), finding its most sophisticated synthesis in John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*, published in 1859. Long before the publication of that work, Mill had been associated with the Utilitarians. His father, James Mill, had collaborated with Bentham and had in 1821 written an influential volume on “political economy,” as economics was then termed. John Stuart, a prodigy allegedly able to read classic Greek and Latin texts as a child, published his own study of political economy in 1848. By the early to mid decades of the nineteenth century, partly due to the publications of such men as Bentham, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill, liberalism had acquired a reasonably precise and widely recognized set of political, economic, and cultural-intellectual dimensions.

Mill’s synthesis, however, was not democratic in the sense of believing that the *demos* (Greek for “people”), or even all adult citizens, should have the vote. In many other regards, Mill edged away from the original ideas of the Utilitarians. The word “democrat,” it should be remembered, retained sinister connotations throughout the nineteenth century for the middle and upper classes. They feared that a popular majority, in assuming power, would move immediately to redistribute wealth. (Readers need also keep in mind that the term “republican” at this time in Europe had little in common with the twentieth-century Republican Party in the United States. A nineteenth-century European republican was viewed as only slightly less threatening than a democrat, since nearly all European governments were monarchies, and the French republic of the 1790s was associated with violence and regicide.)

“Constitutionalism,” one of the many isms that appeared but then faded in popularity, might have been more precise in application to Mill’s synthesis, since in defining liberty he particularly stressed the importance of the rule of law, due process, and constitutional limits on both executive power and popular passions. *On Liberty* made an intricately nuanced case for the rewards of liberty, but Mill was also concerned to address the many dangers lurking in the concept. Indeed, the looming threats of democracy to liberty were among Mill’s major

concerns. His reading of Alexis De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, which appeared in two volumes from 1835 to 1840, played an important role in that regard.

Mature liberalism in Britain, then, was an ideology of freedom but with finely textured and crucial qualifications having mostly to do with freedom's potential excesses. It was rationalistic but also quite aware of the potential destructive role of emotions in human affairs. The liberal state was to be weak in its power to regulate the economy, enhancing freedom for the entrepreneur, but strong in protecting property. It recognized the importance of being assertive in such matters as establishing a sound currency or accurate weights and measures. Most of all, liberals recognized the importance of attending to national defense, which in Britain meant especially a strong navy, but in all countries such a recognition inevitably worked to rationalize growing state power.

The liberal conception of freedom involved parliamentary government and open public debate on matters of state, but deputies to Parliament were still to be men of property, education, and high social standing, certainly not ordinary manual laborers. In the more abstractly intellectual realm, artists and intellectuals under liberal governments were to be permitted much creative freedom, although in practice their freedom remained significantly restricted compared to later understandings of it (e.g., in public discussions or representations of sexual matters). At any rate, intellectual and artistic freedom was of primary concern to educated elites, not the great mass of ordinary citizens.

Mill on Socialism and Feminism

John Stuart Mill, as he grew older, became ever more concerned about issues of social equality, finally agreeing with left-wing critics of Classical Liberalism that formal political equality, when associated with extreme economic inequality, was illusory and would tend to self-destruct. He concluded that some means had to be devised, in the name of social peace and harmony, to open up a more genuine equality of opportunity for those born poor, and to bridge the yawning gap in capitalist societies of rich and poor. He thus gave a sympathetic hearing to a number of moderate socialist critics of laissez-faire capitalism. His inclinations in later life (that is, the 1860s) were similar, then, to those of liberals toward the end of nineteenth century and into the twentieth who accepted an ever more active role for the state in moving toward social justice and equality of opportunity.

Mill's unusually sympathetic attention to the issue of equal rights for women presaged another direction in which liberalism would develop, although only many years after his death. His early feminism was crucially influenced by his long and close association with Mrs. Harriet Taylor, whom he eventually married (after the death of her husband). From the 1830s on, they collaborated on a number of works that sharply criticized the injustices and indignities that women faced in Britain and elsewhere. Mill amply recognized Harriet Taylor's important influence on him in other regards, intellectual and psychological. An eventual but repeatedly postponed product of their collaboration was *The Subjection of Women* (finally published in 1869, when he was sixty-three years old, a year after her death and two years before his own). In it they offered an argument that was based in part on the Utilitarian principle that equal and free participation by women in society would be useful to all of society; the present debased situation of women not only violated the principle of justice but was fundamentally irrational, since it entailed a loss to all of society.

As noted above, the criticism by socialists and many feminists of liberal concepts of property rights had much to do with their critical scrutiny of the many meanings of "equal." Obviously, "human equality" did not mean that humans of each sex were exactly the same; men and women were different in many physical regards, some obvious, some more subtle. They were believed to be dissimilar, moreover, in a range of other substantial ways. Their equality, then, had to be conceptualized primarily in moral or metaphysical terms, having to do with equality of legal rights and related issues of individual human dignity or worth.

This definition of equality had roots in classical philosophy and in Christianity, ultimately related to the concept of the equal worth of the human soul, male and female, before God. Equality of this sort was not something that could be proved by scientific measurement. The equality of women in this metaphysical sense was either accepted as true or rejected as false according to subjective assent – in a sense a "leap of faith." In that regard, it is revealing that years before, Mary Wollstonecraft, for all her admiration of the application of a liberating reason by the French Revolution, was also moved by a fervent Christian faith.

There were feminist arguments of a more empirical nature, maintaining that women were equal to men in physical and intellectual capabilities – or at least much closer to equal than commonly believed. Women were, so it was argued, potentially able to assume most if not all roles in the public sphere that had traditionally been closed to them because of their alleged physical infirmities. But these various kinds of arguments, metaphysical and empirical, were not often clearly distinguished from one another, especially not in popular discourse. Few argued that women could or should take on the heavier sorts of manual labor that men did, where brute physical strength was crucial, or that women should be made eligible for combat duty in the nation's wars.

A larger agenda was suggested by the concept of women's equality of rights. There was, for example, the right to equal education for women (a particular concern of Wollstonecraft and Mill), to equal inheritance and property rights, to legal equality in marriage (and responsibility in child-rearing), and to sexual autonomy (notably in birth control and abortion). In none of the above-mentioned areas was there much of a chance of laws assuring female equality being enacted in the early nineteenth century, since prevailing opinion – female as well as male – held these ideas to be impractical, dangerous, or immoral. Some scholars consider the nineteenth century overall to have been a period of distinct regression in women's rights and a time of a more confident assertion of female inferiority. In this regard, what passed as science in the nineteenth century seems to have played a paradoxical role, in the same way as it did in regard to the issue of equality in the racial realm, since leading scientists claimed to have discovered irrefutable scientific evidence for inequality in both the sexes and the races.

There is little question that some of what passed for scientific inquiry in the nineteenth century was by modern standards not scientific; it offered confirmation of existing entrenched prejudgments that women were physically, mentally, and morally inferior to men, just as the blacks of Africa and other non-European races were widely believed to be inferior to Europeans. It is again revealing that Christian leaders of the day, usually considered backward-looking, were among the most ardent in opposing "scientific" racism, especially insofar as it was used to justify the enslavement of Africans. Their opposition derived mostly from the moral dimension of the concept of

Christian equality. Christian leaders were resistant to science in a broader sense because of the way it threatened biblical certainties and other religious dogmas, but it is mistaken to assume that their religious dogmatism prevented them from moving in “humanistic” or universalistic directions. However, Christian dogma rarely made male religious leaders in favor of the broader aspirations of feminists, since numerous and authoritative biblical texts, in both Old and New Testament, explicitly mandated a subordinate role for women.

Fourier’s Fantastic but “Scientific” Vision of Socialism

It would take many decades before feminist or socialist ideas exercised a broad appeal to both the intelligentsia and the working masses – decades influenced by Marx’s critique of early socialism’s utopian tendencies and his claim to have formulated a scientific version. Fourier’s bizarrely imaginative socialist vision was an easy target for Marx, although Fourier too claimed to be guided by reason and science. His vision resembled what, in the 1960s, would be termed a “non-repressive society,” allowing for unimpeded instinctual gratification and characterized by many fewer negative sanctions than had existed in the past. Fourier proposed a fundamental reorganization of society into self-contained units that he termed *phalanstères*. The word was one of many terms he coined, in this case presumably derived from “phalanx,” the tightly-bound-together military formations of ancient Greece. The *phalanstères* would be communities of 1620 residents (810 of each sex), powerfully joined and harmonized by the intricate interaction of their unique combinations of “passions.”

Although Fourier described himself as the “messiah of Reason,” a man who understood human nature as Christians decidedly did not, he also expressed contempt for what other theorists had claimed to discover in their use of reason, most notably the Utilitarians and the proponents of laissez-faire economics. Similarly, he did not consider industrialization to be a liberating phenomenon. On the contrary, it constituted a monstrous violation of human needs and human nature. The increased productivity that might arise from specialized, repetitive tasks, so lauded by Adam Smith, was for Fourier simply not worth the terrible price paid in regimentation and boredom. He was also disgusted by the corruptions of the financiers that he observed in the late 1790s. His *phalanstères* would, in essence, be agricultural communities, with little need for financial advisers or capital accumulation.

Fourier’s treatment of the notion of equality was also thought-provoking, in that he accepted the moral equality or equal worth of human beings but very much stressed their individual physical and psychic differences (810 varieties!). Women in the *phalanstères* were to enjoy an equality of rights, but Fourier insisted that women were different beings from men, both physically and psychically. Only by recognizing those differences could both sexes find genuine fulfillment. At the same time, Fourier was against the subordination of women to men, and in his system the patriarchal family would cease to exist. He was convinced that a family-based society turned people too much inward, into the private sphere, whereas he believed they should turn outward, fully engaged emotionally in the wider, more diverse and satisfying society provided by the *phalanstères*.

Fourier patiently waited in his office each day for the millionaire who would finance his projects. He waited in vain. In the meantime, a few colonies calling themselves Fourierist were briefly established in France and the New World, but they were only partial efforts to establish what he had envisaged, and they did not last. Fourier's system can be considered a monument to the imagination, a thought-provoking departure from an emerging bourgeois-capitalist society. Nonetheless, if Marx's use of the term "utopian" was apt for any early socialist, it was for Fourier. The term had not been much used in the first half of the century; Marx and Engels gave a particular meaning to it in their pamphlet of February 1848, *The Communist Manifesto*. What they found lacking in Fourier, as in other socialists, was any realistic means to put his ideas into practice.

The "Practical" Socialist, Robert Owen

However, others who were also dismissed as utopian in the *Manifesto* were nonetheless more practical than Fourier – and for several decades much more famous than Marx and Engels. Robert Owen, for example, was a man of action and practical success. In the late eighteenth century, at the beginning of a long and diverse career, he was more of a capitalist reformer than a socialist (a word that did not gain currency until the 1830s). That is, he was a benevolent factory owner who introduced such measures as a shorter working day; safer, more pleasant factory conditions; and schooling for his employees, all the while making a nice profit.

Owen's factory at New Lanark, Scotland, became famous in the opening years of the nineteenth century, visited by thousands. For a while, among Owen's admirers were members of Britain's conservative classes, primarily because of the criticisms he leveled at the greed and social irresponsibility of the country's emerging capitalists. In his *New View of Society* (1813) he contrasted the factory owners with the older ruling orders, whom he described as more socially responsible, more concerned about the welfare of the common people. But, as Owen's own ideas developed, he revealed himself as a man of the Enlightenment, if an unsophisticated one. His scathing attacks on Christianity, as well as his belief in large-scale social engineering, soon began to alienate conservatives.

Owen believed people's natures were decisively formed by their environment, whereas Fourier thought of human nature as fixed at birth. Owen's goal was to alter Britain's destructively competitive environment in order to reform or improve the nature of its inhabitants. Fourier, in contrast, wanted to introduce a radically new yet still rational environment in order to make it harmonious with unchanging human passions. Owen and Fourier differed in another crucial way: Owen was interested in improving and humanizing but not abolishing industrialization. In that regard, he was less utopian than Fourier, more aware of the promise of the increased productivity of labor through modern industrial techniques. Nonetheless, his initial steps in a socialist direction had little to do with modern techniques of production. He proposed a way to remedy unemployment, especially when produced by new machinery, by establishing what he termed "villages of cooperation": self-contained agricultural communities. These were roughly analogous to Fourier's *phalanstères*, although there is no evidence that Owen at this point knew anything about Fourier. However, Owen could not interest the government

or potential wealthy donors in his plans, and, frustrated by what he considered the blindness of his countrymen, he sailed for America in 1824 to launch a more radically utopian-socialist project, named New Harmony, in Indiana.

New Harmony was the first of some fifteen Owenite settlements in the United States. They qualified as socialist in ways that the factory at New Lanark had not. For example, at New Harmony, efforts were made to establish common ownership and popular rule (for both men and women). Still, these were largely self-contained agricultural communities using old technology, not factories with labor-saving machinery. Moreover, the kind of arduous labor in the fields that might have allowed these communities to survive was finally too much for the middle-class idealists who first signed up. A host of other problems arose, and before long frictions and hostile factions emerged. By 1828, Owen's financial support for these communities left him nearly bankrupt. He then returned to Britain, where a nascent labor movement had begun to associate itself with his ideas. ("Owenite" for a while was the most common term used for what would later be referred to as socialist.).

Saint-Simon, Prophet of Modernism

The disillusionment with the notion of isolated agricultural communities as the way to introduce a new cooperative world of socialism was paralleled by an appreciation that such economically static communities were not adequately attuned to the mushrooming problems and challenges of the new industrial world. In that regard, the writings of another famous visionary, Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, attracted attention. He has often been included among the early socialists, partly because some of his admirers took his ideas in socialist directions, but he is best described as a prophet of modernism, in ways that did not fit comfortably into either socialist or liberal categories. More than the early socialists or liberals, Saint-Simon recognized the long-range implications of industrialization. Dismissing the former ruling classes as parasitical, he looked to a time when new elites would rule society on principles of rationality, creativity, efficiency, and productivity.

Owen and other socialists linked their ideas with the emerging demands of the lower classes, but Saint-Simon was an unabashed elitist, one who saw no reason to consider the common people capable of informed opinions and enlightened rule. However, he also supported the notion of "careers open to talent" for unusual individuals from the lower orders. He termed the new elites *les industriels*, which did not mean "industrialists" in the modern sense but rather "the industrious/productive ones." Saint-Simon included skilled manual laborers in the ranks of *les industriels*, but nonetheless the main positions of prestige and authority would be assumed by an elite of the highly educated and creative: the scientists, inventors, and artists.

Saint-Simon dismissed social equality as a sterile, confining notion, one that encouraged a bland sameness and mediocrity, but he also distrusted liberty insofar as it tended to foster a socially destructive competitiveness. As for fraternity, he again gave it an elitist twist, reminiscent of the concept of *noblesse oblige*. Assuring the general welfare of society would be the exclusive responsibility of a new elite: people who could be expected to make the right decisions, which might well not be the most popular ones.

Much of the ideological ferment of the 1830s and 1840s was characterized by the spread of popular slogans, and those Saint-Simonians who moved in a socialist direction were known for such slogans as “end the exploitation of man by man” (to be replaced by the exploitation of nature through cooperative labor) and “to each according to his work, from each according to his ability.” The more practical Saint-Simonians went on to become successful financiers and entrepreneurs, proponents of something akin to later European “organized” or welfare capitalism. Most Saint-Simonians recognized the economic value of market incentives and private ownership, but they believed in giving the state far greater regulatory power than the proponents of laissez-faire economics did. The left-wing or more socialistic of the Saint-Simonians proposed an economic system in which the state would, upon the death of wealthy citizens, redistribute their property to other citizens, on principles of merit, thus abolishing the “privilege” of inherited property.

Such ideas repelled property owners, large and small, but what slowly did gain respect was the Saint-Simonian notion that increasing productivity through industrialization was the only realistic solution to the Social Question. “Primitive” socialists (to whom yet another new term, “communist,” was often applied) tended to think in zero-sum terms, believing that there was a fixed amount of wealth in society. Aiding the poor would then necessarily involve appropriating the riches of the upper classes. Since the wealthy could be expected to resist such measures, primitive socialism also implied violence.

The Communist Tradition

Another slogan of the period became famous (or notorious): “To each according to his needs, from each according to his ability.” It was associated with the “primitive” egalitarianism of Babeuf and the man considered his immediate heir, Auguste Blanqui, in what has been termed by some historians the “communist tradition.” Part of the endless confusion about the “real” meaning of the word “communist” derives from the paradox that young Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels collaborated in the 1840s with an organization called the Communist League and presented their ideas in the *Communist Manifesto*, which was published in early 1848. Yet the communism of Marx and Engels differed notably from the more primitive or premodern form associated with Babeuf.

The *Communist Manifesto*’s fame is almost entirely retrospective, since at the time its young authors were obscure activists and their pamphlet had an insignificant impact on the major events of 1848–50. Still, the *Communist Manifesto* represented a highly readable review, critique, and synthesis of pre-1848 socialist ideas. It can be considered an initial sketch of the ponderous tomes over which Marx would labor in the following decades. Particularly noteworthy in the pamphlet was a paean to the achievements of modern industry, accompanied by fiery condemnations of capitalist egotism and bourgeois hypocrisy.

In their dismissal of the dreams and utopian experiments of previous socialists, Marx and Engels worked in their own trenchant predictions about how a future socialist (or communist) state would be achieved through violent revolution by the organized working class, or proletariat. “Proletariat” was another new word, previously used by Babeuf, from which Blanqui created the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx and

Engels then used that notion, with key refinements in its meaning. The liberated human condition of the future envisaged by Marx and Engels seemed to borrow from Fourier's visions of a non-repressed humanity, yet the emphasis on inevitable class conflict and violent revolution resembled an entirely different tradition, that of Babeuf and Blanqui. The confident assertion that a repressive capitalist stage was necessary before establishing a socialism of plenty further borrowed from Saint-Simonian ideas.

Romanticism and Classicism

Although Marx and Engels later claimed to be hard-headed realists, strictly scientific in their analysis, their ideas were transparently influenced by early nineteenth-century romanticism, a highly unscientific frame of mind. Romanticism has often been described as the prevalent early nineteenth-century zeitgeist, or spirit of the age. Although the term was initially coined to describe cultural and artistic trends (suggesting "romance," or matters involving emotion), all three of the major political ideologies, in their early stages, have also been termed Romantic. Romantic tendencies have been traced back the late eighteenth century, when they began to appear in reaction to the "cold" rationalism of the Enlightenment. Romantics emphasized the centrality of non-rational faculties – intuition, creativity, imagination, personal genius – and were fascinated by the wild and untamed, both in the world of nature and in the human personality. Romantic love may be considered the most wild and incomprehensible, the most inspiring and yet also often the most destructive emotion of all.

Even more than was the case with the proponents of the three political ideologies, various Romantics used the same words to mean remarkably different things, but one can nonetheless delineate a central vision for romanticism: "Truth" (or a vision of the Highest Good) in its most important forms comes through the emotions or other non-rational faculties, not reason; the Enemy, then, was the cool – and "terribly simplifying" – rationalist. The connections to the thought of Edmund Burke are worth noting.

The main thinkers of the Enlightenment had been perfectly aware of the importance of emotion in human affairs. However, most of the *philosophes* looked to the control, by the use of reason, of errant and socially destructive emotions, or to the construction of rational systems that would channel such emotions in socially useful ways. Adam Smith, for example, sought to put greed to economically useful purposes through the free market. (Greed, obviously, was not an emotion that the Romantics were inclined to get romantic about, nor did they think that greater insights into reality were achieved by it. What Romantics meant by "emotion" was typically imprecise. Fourier, in his elaboration of human "passions," took the Enlightened approach to the rational exploitation of emotions to an impressive extreme.)

The differences between the emotional emphases of romanticism and the controlled, rational emphases of classicism are readily sensed in their respective uses of sound and color. In music and the visual arts, romanticism is alternately dreamy, immoderate, heated, and passionate, whereas classicism is controlled, balanced, and formal. However, in terms of political ideology, matters were less clear. On the one hand, Burke's veneration of tradition was Romantic in tendency, but, on the other, romanticism and liberalism were natural allies in their yearning for liberation (and especially "romantic"

were liberty's assumed links to creativity and spontaneity). Yet the yearnings for freedom of many liberals were distinct from those of most socialists; activists drawn into the revolutionary mystique were different types from those liberals who looked to respectability, a stable society of property, family, and free enterprise – a decidedly circumscribed version of freedom.

Further complicating the issue, some conservatives glorified the “romantic” chivalry of the Middle Ages or the selfless and heroic virtues of the Crusaders. Many Romantics were drawn to Napoleon; other Romantics saw him as Satan's spawn. Feminism was linked with the rationalist left, but some of its theorists tended to elevate characteristically feminine emotions as superior to male rationality. In fact, the rebellious spirit and the related justification of rebellion through emotions have historically settled on both the right and left, a point that in the twentieth century became particularly evident, since both Bolsheviks and Nazis considered themselves selfless revolutionaries who spoke for the masses, and both depended to a decisive degree upon non-rational devices in their recruitment. The anarchist bomb-throwers of the late nineteenth century and the Islamic fanatics of the early twenty-first century might both be termed Romantics, especially in the way their ideas attracted selfless idealists, on the one hand, and power-hungry fanatics, on the other.

Further Reading

On the main isms, see Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism* (many editions and printings); Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (1984); David McLellan, *Ideology* (1986); and Richard Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (2007).

Isaiah Berlin's *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (1998) contains a series of essays on the history of ideas in modern Europe by a celebrated Oxford historian.

Russell Kirk and Roger Scruton's *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* (2009) suffers a bit from partisan admiration but is still rich in information and insights.

For a concise overview of the tangled Jewish Question, see Chapter 1 of Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy, eds., *Antisemitism: A History* (2010).

For an in-depth exploration of the most utopian of the Utopians, as well as an wide-ranging introduction to the period, see Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World* (1986).

Part II From the 1820s to the Great Depression of the 1870s and 1880s

Part II (Chapters 5–8) spans approximately forty-five years, from the late 1820s to the early 1870s. These years are often described as having witnessed a transformation from pre-1848 romanticism to post-1848 realism, in visual art, music, and literature, as in politics. By the late 1840s, Metternich's efforts to smother leftist and nationalist agitation had run completely aground, with revolutions rapidly spreading throughout most of the Continent between 1848 and 1850, unparalleled in their initial spontaneity – but also remarkable in their ignominious collapse. The next two decades began, again, with a period of repression but culminated in dramatic developments, prominent among them the unification of both Italy and Germany.

France made renewed claims to European leadership, and Napoleon III played a key role in this period. He took reactionary Russia and Austria down a notch and encouraged “the national idea,” most clearly in his initial support of Italian unification in 1859–60. But, by the end of the 1860s, it had become clear that the French leader had overplayed his hand, and by the early 1870s the relationships of Europe's states had been transformed, symbolized most potently in the humiliating defeat of France in 1870–1 by Prussia, whose king became emperor of a unified German Reich. This new nation soon promised to become Europe's most dynamic – and problematic, deeply threatening its neighbors, changing the previous balance of power, and causing major shifts in the alliances of the major powers.

Underlying these political and diplomatic changes were profound transformations in Europe's economies and societies; Germany's industrialization was especially noteworthy, even before unification. Nearly all countries in Europe witnessed unprecedented population growth, and the military might of the great powers grew apace. Everywhere, but especially in the more western countries, there was a corresponding optimism of Europe's peoples, a mounting confidence in progress and a special

European destiny. In this regard Britain was the initial pace-setter, not only in economic growth but also in the relatively successful way that the country's elites were able to refashion its institutions to manage that growth. In the 1830s and 1840s its ruling elites passed legislation that smoothed Britain's move into its celebrated "classic" liberal period of the 1850s and 1860s. One of several reasons for France's decline relative to Britain was that its leaders proved less flexible and far-sighted than those of Britain. That failing was related to the deep political differences that continued to plague the country. France experienced a number of failed uprisings and then a revolution in 1830, putting a more liberal king into power. Another revolution in 1848 established a republic, which soon became a new Napoleonic empire. In 1871 yet another republic, the third, was in formation, one that would last, though often beleaguered, until the beginning of World War II.

The rise of the Germans and British paralleled – and intensified – the concern, bordering on paranoia, of Russia's rulers, and their sense of vulnerability to the west. After the death of the reactionary Nicholas I in 1855, Alexander II undertook extensive modernizing reforms, including the liberation of the country's serfs. But these measures were flawed and failed to satisfy a large proportion of his subjects, fueling a turn to terrorism and Alexander's assassination in 1881. The Habsburg Empire felt roughly similar vulnerabilities; its internal reforms and efforts at consolidation resulted in the creation of the more centralized and modernized Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary in 1867. However, its leaders continued to suffer from a sense of economic backwardness and a related growing threat from the nations to their west.

The period from the 1820s through the 1860s is often described as one in which liberal values triumphed over conservative ones, but the failures of the revolutions of 1848–50 are also often described as marking a failure of liberalism. The seeming contradiction has in part to do with the many dimensions of liberalism, as suggested in Chapter 4. Liberalism's failure in 1848–50 was most palpably one of liberal political institutions on the Continent in achieving national unification, especially in central Europe. However, in other regards liberal values in fact prevailed. Britain's borders and national institutions were established and relatively secure, and so nothing comparable to the Continental failure of liberal nationalism occurred in Britain in 1848. Instead, it became known as a success story.

To term Tsar Alexander II a liberal or a bearer of liberal values is a stretch, but he did some "liberating" things nonetheless: freeing the serfs and introducing more freedoms into the life of a population (including Russia's many Jews) that had had relatively little experience of them. Between the extremes of Britain and Russia, there were many intermediate countries. France, too, did not face issues of national unification, but the years 1848–50 represented another kind of liberal failure for France. Napoleon's authoritarian empire amply violated political and intellectual aspects of the full liberal program, but, nonetheless, moderate liberals in France rallied to Napoleon because he effectively repressed the radical left while still remaining modern and antimonarchist, favoring the growth of modern industry. Prussia, too, had a much stronger executive and a weaker parliament than in the British model, but nonetheless the institutional and legal framework for rapid industrialization existed

in Prussia. Roughly comparable remarks can be made for the Habsburg Empire. In the most general sense, one can say that the center of gravity of liberalism shifted to the right, shying away from notions of republican, radical democracy and allying with the forces of order, monarchies, and militaries that liberals had previously opposed, but that shift was not a complete failure of liberal ideals.

Most of the isms introduced in Chapter 4 took on more mature or more practical forms after 1848, particularly as political parties, most famously in the formation of the British Liberal and Conservative parties. In most other countries, political parties were formed that identified themselves with one or more of the new political isms. Socialist parties did not become a major force until the generation before World War I, but they were beginning to form by the 1860s, most conspicuously in Germany. Marx's ideas began to spread into an audience that was significantly wider than had been the case in the middle years of the century. The most important ism not yet amply examined, nationalism, took on central importance in mid-century, an importance that would only grow – metastasize, some have argued – well into the twentieth century.

5 Liberal Struggles, Victories, Dilemmas, Defeats

From the 1820s to the mid-1840s, Metternich's vigilance on the Continent remained reasonably effective; the balance of power established in 1815 held, with various adjustments, but many contemporaries suffered from a sense of sitting on a rumbling volcano. The basic ideological issue of the period remained the search for stability in the face of seemingly inexorable forces for change. The ranks of the lowest orders of society, often referred to by contemporaries as "the dangerous class," were growing at an unprecedented pace, especially by the 1840s. The expanding numbers and wealth of the urban middle classes, too, contributed to the restiveness of the epoch. For most of those urban classes, especially those living in central and eastern Europe, nationalist aspirations mixed with concerns for social reform, liberalization, and modernization (though the terms meant different things to different people).

It would have taken near-superhuman genius to assure peace and tranquility in the context of these forces for change, but no such geniuses appeared. Many political leaders in these years, on the contrary, must be characterized as ideologically rigid or simply incompetent – resorting to brutal, self-defeating repressions of those clamoring for reform. The Hungry Forties tended to cast a dark cloud over existing hopes for a shining future. Indeed, those years suggested to many observers the likelihood of a general long-term decline rather than progress in material welfare.

Metternich had little if any influence inside Britain, where liberalizing but gradual reforms of great future significance were undertaken – peacefully, at least in comparison to France, but by no means effortlessly, and especially in the 1840s there was much popular unrest. Britain's relatively peaceful evolution had at least one especially terrible dark side. What has been termed the Great Hunger in Ireland, ranking as Europe's greatest human tragedy between the religious wars of the seventeenth century and the Great War of 1914–19, was brought on by a failure of the potato crop in

the mid-to-late 1840s. It resulted in death to over a million Irish – often lingering, degrading, heart-breaking. The crop failure also led to a mass exodus from Ireland, mostly to America, of something like a million more, finally resulting in an absolute decline of Ireland's population from around 8 million in the early 1840s to around 3 million a decade or so later. In other areas of Europe, hunger stalked the land; the grim reaper continued to haunt the imaginations of most European countries.

The Revolution of 1830 in France

A decade after the Vienna Congress, concerns about future revolutionary disturbances still tended to focus on France, and not without reason, since by the mid-1820s France was “sneezing” yet again. Louis XVIII died in 1824, and his reactionary younger brother, the Count of Artois, assumed the throne as Charles X. This was ominous news for those who were working for tranquility, since Charles and his Ultra entourage, long restive under Louis, now introduced measures that could only be termed provocative. It seemed almost as if Charles were taunting his adversaries: “Go ahead, try to make a revolution!” These measures included a law establishing the death penalty for anyone guilty of committing sacrilege to a Church building (e.g., painting graffiti on it). Similarly, an allocation of some 30 million francs a year was projected in compensation to those who had lost property during the Revolution.

Charles's coronation ceremony, with its elaborate medieval pomp, symbolized his reactionary intent. He made it quite clear that he had no respect for the idea of popular sovereignty – only God gave him the right to rule. The culminating provocation, after more than five years of mounting tension, came with a series of abruptly announced ordinances in July 1830, further restricting representation to the Chamber of Deputies and in other ways limiting the constitutional freedoms of France's citizens. It took only three “glorious” days of popular uprisings (long remembered as *les trois glorieuses*) to persuade Charles to flee into exile.

These three days, however glorious they appeared to participants, did not result in a victory that satisfied all of Charles's opponents. Probably no victory could have. The republican or radical opposition, those who had actually mounted the barricades, soon felt tricked and betrayed. They watched as a narrow elite again took over, composed of politicians who had little interest in significant measures to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, let alone to satisfy the expectations of those on the left who clamored for a “social republic.”

Conservative observers in the rest of Europe were also uneasy about developments after the July revolution. Charles's defeat was widely viewed as a resounding setback for the principle of legitimacy throughout Europe. Revolutionaries had violently forced out a legitimate monarch and replaced him with new king of dubious legitimacy and political intentions. That king was the former Duke of Orleans, who now took up the name Louis Philippe. Referred to as the “bourgeois monarch,” he was distantly related to the Bourbons, but in personal beliefs, habits, and even dress he was patently a different kind of king. In the 1790s, rather than joining the royalist émigrés, he had served in France's republican army. He now accepted the tricolor flag of the republicans rather than

retaining the Bourbon *fleur de lys* (lily), and he spoke of himself as king of the French rather than king of France by the grace of God. The French state remained a constitutional monarchy, now commonly referred to as the July Monarchy. Its constitution resembled the Charter of 1814, but a number of liberalizing adjustments were made to it, and the vote was extended from about 100,000 to about 200,000 voters.

That extension was hardly a drastic measure (one in thirty adult males now had the vote), but most contemporary observers seemed to conclude that the new regime represented a significant advance for previously much-underrepresented middle-class interests. Still, only the highest ranks of the bourgeoisie, composed mostly of wealthy financiers and bankers, were enfranchised. Similarly, the new king chose his ministers from the wealthiest ranks of the *grande bourgeoisie*, not from ordinary or middle-class businessmen. It was further revealing that those subsequently elected to the Chamber of Deputies were almost exclusively large landowners, men with few obvious connections to the world of modern industry. In terms of sympathy for the urban poor, the new ruling elite was only barely distinguishable from the entourage of Charles X.

Unrest in the 1830s

The French revolution of July 1830, however restrained, had repercussions elsewhere that put the settlement of 1815 into question. Residents of the Catholic south of the Netherlands retained a separate Belgian identity after having been joined to the Protestant north by the Congress of Vienna. From 1797 to 1815, the Belgians had been incorporated into metropolitan France, and now some of them nursed hopes to rejoin it. French nationalists, too, aspired to regain the Belgian areas, contributing to the restoration of France's natural frontier at the Rhine, to say nothing of adding a prosperous and industrially advanced area of over 4 million people. The heavy hand of the Protestant Dutch king caused further grumbling, and those Belgians whose native tongue was French (or more properly Walloon, closely related to French) bristled under regulations that required them to use the Dutch language. In August 1830, violent disturbances erupted in Brussels, with demands initially for autonomy but soon escalating to a call for complete independence for the Belgian south.

Polish nationalists were also inspired by the three glorious days to declare their independence from Russia. Nicholas I, tsar of Russia and king of Poland since 1825, had acquired the reputation by 1830 of being a brutal autocrat. He called on the other major powers to respond rapidly to the unrest in both the Netherlands and Poland. In the course of the following year he sent his armies into Poland, crushing the Polish revolt. He also terminated Poland's status as a separate kingdom and sentenced thousands of Polish insurgents to exile in Siberia. Thousands more fled westward, becoming prominent in the ranks of the Romantic exiles and revolutionaries who settled in Europe's capital cities, Paris most of all.

The unrest of the Belgians was ultimately dealt with in a less violent manner. The situation had initially seemed ominous when, in early 1831, the newly formed Belgian national assembly called upon the son of Louis Philippe to be their king. French patriots were at the same time urging an aggressive foreign policy on their new monarch. But Louis Philippe, impressed with the precariousness of his own situation, announced a

policy of non-intervention in Belgium. He called upon Talleyrand for a last hurrah, and the by-now venerable diplomat, seventy-seven years old, arranged for a minor German prince (an uncle of the future Queen Victoria), Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, to serve as Belgium's king, becoming Leopold I. Belgium was established as a separate and permanently neutral country, which it would remain into the twenty-first century, interrupted only by a few years of German occupation during the first and second world wars.

The new Belgian kingdom was widely viewed as being even more of a bourgeois monarchy than that of Louis Philippe. Belgians were stereotyped as a stolid, business-obsessed people – a duller version of their French and Dutch former rulers. In the coming decades of rising nationalism, Belgium, with its mixed Walloon and Flemish population, seemed an anachronism. Ethnic strife repeatedly flared up in the country, but its unity survived, and its capital city would eventually play a key role in the unification of Europe after 1945.

The revolution of 1830 in France also spurred on reformers in Britain, although reforming energies of a broader nature than those in France had been building in Britain for some time. Robert Owen returned from the United States in 1828 to lend his by then famous name to a nascent working-class movement, one characterized by experiments in establishing cooperative retail stores and organizing trade unions. By 1830, several hundred such cooperatives had been established, linked in various ways to the trade unions (striking workers and cooperative retail stores, for example, joined hands to form non-capitalist “union shops”).

More center-stage but related to working-class militancy, agitation in support of broad electoral reform in Britain had increased significantly by the late 1820s. The reactionary panic responsible for the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 had begun to subside, and the policies followed by British conservatives by this time made for revealing contrasts with those of the Ultras in France. While Charles X's regime was reverting to a medieval Catholicism, in Britain the ruling conservatives oversaw the passage of a series of laws that allowed full civil equality for Catholics and for dissenting Protestants (that is, those not members of the Church of England). Similarly, the Combination Acts, which had earlier been passed in reaction to the French Revolution, making trade-union activity nearly impossible, were repealed in 1824, setting the stage for a surge in working-class agitation in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

There were nonetheless definite limits to what British conservatives would support. Jewish civil equality would have to wait, for example. More importantly, most conservatives continued to resist the notion of reforming the archaic procedures by which members of Parliament were elected. Similarly, they were opposed to repealing the Corn Laws, passed in 1815 in a transparently self-interested move by large landowning (and grain-producing) interests to introduce tariffs that protected the price of grain from open-market competition. Thus, grain prices remained artificially high, in what liberals considered a particularly galling violation of the principles of free trade. Since large landholding interests also depended on the electoral laws to keep them in power, the prospect of electing members of Parliament who would repeal the Corn Laws seemed remote. But high grain prices, which translated into high food costs and thus into high labor costs, outraged not only business interests but also leaders of the working class in Britain.

The House of Commons had never in its history been so unrepresentative of the general population as it was by the 1820s. New industrial areas had sprung up, mostly

in the midlands and north, areas that in earlier years had been less densely populated than the south. By the 1820s many of the burgeoning factory towns, Manchester most famously, were starkly underrepresented in Parliament, whereas other areas with static or even declining populations retained the same representation they had had for centuries. Reformers referred to these conditions as aspects of “old corruption.” Large landowners were similarly denounced as a parasitical class, living in indolent splendor but contributing little to national wealth.

Well over twenty different bills seeking parliamentary reform had been voted down by 1830, when suddenly the three glorious days in France suggested how easily a regime that refused to recognize changing realities might be overthrown. Mass demonstrations, milling crowds, and acts of mob violence characterized late 1830 and much of the following year, paralleled by convoluted political maneuvering in Parliament. Finally, in what has long been deemed a decisive juncture in modern British history, the Reform Bill of 1832 passed both houses of Parliament.

The Reform Bill opened the way for newer business interests to assume a role in running the country. In a related way, the bill contributed to a realignment of Britain’s political parties. The aristocratic Whigs, dominant in the eighteenth century and historically associated with parliamentary opposition to royal power, gradually joined forces with business leaders and a few Tories to form the Liberal Party. The main body of the Tories, joined by a few Whigs and other minor factions, gradually formed the Conservative Party (though the older name “Tory” also continued to be used for it). This realignment set up the celebrated two-party system that characterized British politics for the following century.

While it is true that Britain’s monarch and traditional ruling orders proved themselves more flexible than their counterparts in France, there was still a die-hard reactionary faction in Britain. The Reform Bill passed only after that faction was pressed to the wall by popular unrest. Historians have concluded that revolution was nearer in 1831–2 than in any period of modern British history. Nonetheless, it seems also the case that existing British institutions were respected by a larger part of the population than was the case in France, and that respect would grow to something close to reverence in the course of the nineteenth century. Similarly, a growing respect for commercial values and interests characterized important parts of the older ruling orders of Britain. Perhaps most importantly, Britain’s middle class and urban population were relatively large, growing, and prosperous; to continue to deny them parliamentary recognition was less feasible than in France.

Some of the legislation that immediately followed the passage of the Reform Bill was revealing in the ways that “freedom” was implemented. In 1833, slavery was abolished in the British Empire, a seemingly axiomatic move for liberals. But in the next year the New Poor Law was passed, a measure that may be seen as an example of how freedom from one perspective could look like slavery from another. Business interests had long been dissatisfied with the old poor law, since they believed it impeded labor mobility – in other words, that it did not adequately encourage the unemployed to move out of their home parishes in search of work elsewhere. Workers were no doubt reticent to accept the unfamiliar, regimented labor of the sort that was common in the new factories. The New Poor Law sought to remedy the perceived defects of the old law by establishing workhouses for the unemployed, in which conditions were distinctly less agreeable than any to be found in the factories in the open market. Under the new law, a jobless man

consigned to a workhouse was, for example, separated from his wife and children, in order that he not be able to continue enjoying, while out of work, the “domestic pleasures” permitted under the old law.

One obvious goal of the new law, based on laissez-faire economic theory, was to make Britain’s labor force “freer” – more mobile, more flexible, and ultimately more productive because more rationally utilized. A mobile workforce was undoubtedly desirable from the standpoint of the employer, and also from the perspective of the overall productivity of the economy in the long run, but many unemployed workers saw things in a different light. From their perspective, being consigned to a new workhouse represented a kind of slavery or imprisonment, and these new institutions were soon denounced by workers as “bastilles.” A leading radical newspaper of the day, *The Poor Man’s Guardian*, angrily editorialized that “of all governments, the government of the middle class is the most grinding and remorseless.”

Already in early 1832, shortly after the Reform Bill had been passed, working-class leaders had expressed disappointment that the overwhelming majority of the population still remained without the vote. Although there had been significant redistribution of political representation by region and class, the total number of voters rose from around a half-million to only 800,000 (one adult male in eight), and the new voters came mostly from the comfortable middle class, not the laboring masses. Compared to the France of the July Monarchy, where only one in thirty adult males enjoyed the vote, the reform in Britain could no doubt be seen as significant, but it by no means satisfied all.

A large body of other reforming legislation was passed in the decade or so following the passage of the Reform Bill. As the parties began to realign, Tory conservatives, in the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, tended to assume the role of defenders of the poor against the alleged rapacity of the capitalist employers. The Tory sponsorship of the Factory Act of 1833 attracted relatively wide support in its outlawing of the employment of children under nine years of age in the textile mills. Some employers protested this interference in their freedom as entrepreneurs, but there seemed a fairly wide recognition that freedom to exploit the labor of children under nine years of age should not be included in an acceptable definition of British liberty. Further legislative limitations on the labor of children and women followed in the course of the century, although effective enforcement of the laws continually lagged behind.

Agitation to Repeal the Corn Laws

Repeal of the Corn Laws long loomed as a major item on the agenda of Britain’s liberal reformers. Even after the passage of the Reform Bill, the Corn Laws’ defenders remained formidable opponents. Such was the case because of their practical political experience but also because of some nettlesome issues that came to be central to political debates in nearly every country of Europe for the next two centuries. Defenders of the Corn Laws argued that protection of agricultural prices was vital to the survival of Britain’s historic aristocracy, the upper element of society that had purportedly retained a broad sense of responsibility toward society as a whole. It was also claimed that Britain’s aristocracy had acquired, over the centuries, invaluable political experience. Defenders of the Corn Laws thus argued that it was in Britain’s national interest to preserve a balance between

agriculture and industry in order that the country not become overly dependent on the importation of food – a particularly crucial consideration in any future war.

The Anti-Corn Law League, established in 1838, firmly rejected such arguments. The story of its lengthy but ultimately successful campaign, finally achieving the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, has long been part of the prevailing narrative of British political and economic history, marking a broader victory of liberal principles and the rise of Britain to world eminence. The Anti-Corn Law League was well financed and efficiently run; it drew from the well-rehearsed and sophisticated arguments of the classical economists. Moreover, the league used many of the techniques of persuasion that came to characterize modern political parties (torchlight rallies, coordinated newspaper articles and pamphlets, lecture tours of noted speakers). Its central argument was that industrial development, so crucial to Britain's future, would be crippled by high food prices. All countries, not only Britain, would benefit if tariff walls fell and each country were free to concentrate on what it did best. For example, Britain's cool, rainy climate was not ideal for grain production, whereas the country's factories could produce textiles, railroad equipment, and various other tools of industrialization more efficiently than any other. Aided by its highly developed financial services, Britain could become the "workshop of the world."

But reservations about the league's argument lingered. Aside from concerns about the negative impact of free trade in grain on Britain's political elite, critics continued to doubt the wisdom of allowing Britain to become dependent on imported agricultural products to feed its rapidly growing population. To be sure, if the future of Europe was certain to be one of peace and cooperation between nations, the vision of a Europe composed of sovereign states without tariff barriers – each specializing in the economic activities most favored by its land and climate – appeared a highly appealing one. But could such a future realistically be expected? Was such an expectation not "utopian liberalism" – scarcely less flawed than utopian socialism?

Liberal principles were no doubt rising in general esteem, but their precise application in various realms was still being hammered out – and indeed would continue to shift in emphasis throughout the following centuries. Economic freedom came to be widely accepted as desirable, once defined with greater precision, but what might "freedom" in international relations mean? The assumption behind the concept of the balance of power was that Europe's states were aggressive, not naturally inclined to peace and cooperation. Such being the case, British observers were nearly unanimous in believing that a powerful navy was crucial to the welfare of their country. In a related way, British prosperity through trade required secure markets in the rest of the world, not only in Europe. Important parts of that world were being added to the British Empire, but that empire, too, suggested some awkward contradictions for liberals, insofar as liberalism entailed a belief in the freedom and equality of all peoples – because Britain was conquering and dominating them, rather than freeing them.

The Great Hunger in Ireland

The victory of economic liberalism in 1846 with the repeal of the Corn Laws also occurred in the context of profoundly troubled times in Ireland, which suggested some other long-standing uncertainties about the implications of freedom in modern times.

The Irish pointed a finger of accusation at British officials who favored letting market forces solve economic problems “in the long run,” even if, in the short run, in the absence of state intervention, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people suffered degradation and death. In a broader way, the growing self-congratulation of British liberals was fiercely challenged by an Irish counternarrative that viewed the British as cruel, arrogant, and exploitative.

A rancorous literature grew up concerning the reaction of Britain’s rulers to the Great Hunger in Ireland. These exchanges drew upon centuries of bitter relations between the Irish people and their rulers in London – a history that would simmer and repeatedly boil over for yet another century and a half, exacerbated by differences of language and ethnicity (Celtic vs. English) and religion (Catholic vs. Protestant), but perhaps most of all by the kind of distrust and enmity that emerges almost inevitably when an economically or militarily expanding people exists side by side with a people much less successful in those regards.

The Irish Question by the mid-nineteenth century had a number of paradoxical aspects. The agricultural population of Ireland of these years remained among the poorest, most exploited, and most widely maligned in Europe, yet, like other wretchedly poor populations of the day, such as the Jews of eastern Europe and the southern Italians, the Irish rural masses reproduced at a simply astonishing rate. Since the eighteenth century nearly all of Europe’s population had begun to grow as never before, but, as noted above, the Irish population grew from around 2.6 million in the 1750s to 8 million by the beginning of the 1840s. In roughly the same period the population of Scotland grew from 1.2 to 2.6 million and that of Portugal from 2.2 to 3.4 million.

The reasons for this spurt in population have been much debated, but all observers agree that one factor was the introduction of the potato to Ireland. This remarkably nutritious root became a staple food of the poor in many other areas of Europe but nowhere more than in Ireland. Since the potato was also easily grown, even in boggy, rainy areas unfit for other crops, a small plot of land for growing potatoes could support a family, encouraging the Irish lower classes to marry earlier and produce many children. However, the Irish poor did not own the land they worked and therefore did not share the same incentives as land-owning peasants in nineteenth-century France, who tended to restrict births in order to avoid dividing their land among their children. Protestant absentee landlords owned much of the extensively subdivided land in Catholic Ireland, but they little resembled the improving landlords of the English agricultural revolution. On the contrary, they were notorious for their indolence, irresponsibility, and parasitical relationship to those who worked their lands. Even before the mass exodus of the late 1840s and 1850s, close to 2 million Irish had left for the Americas, fleeing what seemed a hopeless situation in the land of their birth.

When the potato was infected with a devastating blight in 1845–6, again in 1848, and yet again in 1851, the impact on the poorest part of the Irish population was catastrophic. Observers wrote of how the dead and dying littered the roadways, of how entire families silently starved to death in their earthen huts. Rampant disease attacked the weak and malnourished, especially children and old people. Looking back over a century later, the noted British historian A.J.P. Taylor described Ireland in the late 1840s as one large death camp, recalling Bergen-Belsen or Auschwitz. Unlike the Holocaust, the potato blight was nature’s work, more devastating and long-term in its

effects than any earthquake or flood experienced by Europeans in modern times. Uncommon foresight and humanity on the part of British officials would no doubt have helped to mitigate the horrors of the Great Hunger, but those officials were largely unprepared for the crisis. At least some of them, moreover, were inclined to blame the Irish themselves for the horrors that descended upon them. Irish nationalist historians have charged British officials with criminal negligence, or even a gloating satisfaction over the Irish tragedy.

In partial defense of those officials, it could be observed that, rather than criminal in the normally understood sense, those officials were all-too-typical products of their age and class. Charles Trevelyan, one of the officials most directly in charge of dealing with the Irish situation, became a special target of denunciation by Irish nationalists. He was not quite the genocidal monster of some descriptions, but he nonetheless did suggest that the famine was sanctioned by divine Providence and was to be understood in the light of immutable economic laws that he personally could not counter. Similarly, he and many other leading British spokesmen saw Irish troubles as patently related to Irish cultural defects – “indolence, improvidence, and disorder,” in the words of a London *Times* editorial of the day.

The Darker Vision of Thomas Malthus

We tend to forget how much the nineteenth-century belief in unending progress was accompanied by a parallel darker vision, one of unavoidable suffering for the lower orders. That darker vision had been most famously (or notoriously) formulated in the late eighteenth century by Thomas Malthus. In 1797, in the same year that he was ordained as a minister of the Church of England, Malthus published *An Essay on Population*, presenting the argument that human populations tended to reproduce themselves much faster than food could be produced to keep them alive and well. From that observation, he offered the provocative conclusion that whenever material conditions did improve, whenever wages rose or food prices declined, the lower orders would negate the positive effect by producing too many children – “too many” since agricultural production could not possibly keep up, and the inexorable result of improved material conditions would be overcrowding, famine, and disease for those lower orders.

To modern observers, Malthus’s facts appear unreliable and his reasoning dubious, but his book became one of the most discussed and influential of the day, in Britain and elsewhere. Many of his contemporaries seemed to find a kind of justification in his dark vision: Because of powerful economic laws, the lowest ranks of society were forever doomed to poverty and destitution, even while the classes above them were growing richer and more comfortable. Moreover, efforts by governing authorities to alleviate the condition of the poor, so the argument continued, were not only useless but counterproductive. Economics, or political economy, came to be known, given such conclusions, as “the dismal science.”

“Science” of that sort was obviously useful to those who sought to pay their workers as little as possible. Such was the capitalist ethic, but in raw terms it was difficult to reconcile with Christian morality. In a broader sense, Malthus’s ideas blended with a pervasive belief in nineteenth-century Europe that strife was inevitable, that there was

a paradoxical connection between destruction and creation. The best advice Malthus, as a Christian minister, could offer the poor was that they should postpone marriage as long as possible and, once married, avoid a “too active” sex life. In one of history’s many ironies, Malthus’s name later became identified with contraception (“Malthusian devices”), even though he himself firmly rejected as immoral any birth-control measures, aside from abstention from sex. He suggested that taking cold showers and praying might be of use if the sexual urge became too strong; “self-abuse” was utterly out of the question. Aside from the stringent biblical prohibitions against it, Malthus and others confidently asserted that it caused blindness and mental retardation.

Again, Revolution in France

Malthus had his critics, particularly those who could not accept the iron laws of the political economists and who believed in the moral obligation of the state to remedy the Social Question. The Hungry Forties on the Continent witnessed nothing quite so catastrophic in human lives as the Great Hunger, but those years were nonetheless bleak and troubled in most areas of Europe. Again, eyes were especially on Paris, a city to which émigrés and malcontents of every stripe from nearly every European country were drawn, to say nothing of the throngs of unemployed from the French provinces. Other major European cities experienced similar movements of population, but Paris remained in this regard as in so many others Europe’s capital, an especially powerful magnet for artists, painters, nationalist exiles, and revolutionaries of many persuasions. It was in Paris that the young German revolutionaries Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels formed their lasting friendship.

The French economy had been less dislocated by industrialization and population growth than was the case in Britain, but it was nonetheless impossible in these years to walk the streets of Paris without becoming acutely aware of the Social Question. Part of the population was in dire distress, with no obvious remedy in sight. Contacts proliferated between intellectuals and those representing the common people. By the 1840s the diffusion of antiliberal, antiradical, and antisocialist ideologies had become well developed, especially in France and Britain. The disappointments of the extreme left over the negligible reforms of Louis Philippe’s July Monarchy turned more rancorous by the 1840s, intensified by a series of scandals revealing corruption in the government. Louis Philippe’s ministers came to epitomize, for the left at least, a particularly galling mindset. His longest-serving prime minister, François Guizot, when addressing a crowd that was protesting the restricted suffrage in France, quipped that they were being foolish: If they wanted the vote, well, all they had to do was “get rich” (*enrichissez-vous!*).

Such supercilious attitudes stoked the fires of revolution; Guizot’s quip was repeatedly quoted and became one of many potent symbols for antiliberal, antibourgeois forces for the rest of the century. For the extreme left, the virtues of self-reliance and enterprise claimed by members of the bourgeoisie were little more than masks covering insufferable complacency and hypocrisy. A key element of identity formation and ideological preference in these years had to do with just such imagery; Guizot and his ilk were the Enemy.

Reform in Britain: The Chartist Movement

After the excitements leading to the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832 and the ensuing anti-Corn Law agitation, most of those reformers who hoped for “democracy” or popular rule in Britain directed their energies to the Chartist movement, one the most famous of the mid-nineteenth century. The movement’s name derived from the People’s Charter, first drawn up in 1838 and then repeatedly presented to Parliament, backed by millions of signatures – and each time disdainfully rejected. The Charter presented a six-point program of radical political reform, but the final intent of most Chartists was more than political reform. It was widely understood that, once the Chartist program was accepted, far-reaching economic and social legislation in a leveling or even socialist direction would ensue. The points included the vote for all adult males, an end to property requirements for members of the House of Commons, annual parliamentary elections, secret ballots, and more equitably divided electoral districts. The repeated rejections of the Charter by Parliament tended to encourage “physical force” Chartism, whose proponents talked of a general strike by the working class to coerce members of Parliament to accept the Charter. Some physical force Chartists incited riots, resulting in violent repression by the authorities.

The Chartist movement revived in the spring of 1848, as revolutions were spreading on the Continent, but again it was firmly rebuffed, and Chartism is usually considered one of history’s great failures. It did not achieve its immediate goals, but Chartist agitation exercised enough of an intimidating pressure on British authorities that the passage of other legislation was facilitated (e.g., the Ten Hours Act of 1847, which alleviated some of the worst conditions faced by the working class).

Revolutions of 1848 and the End of Metternich’s Europe

The revolutions that spread across Continental Europe in 1848 were characterized by many surprises. For a century thereafter historians pondered the origins of these swiftly spreading upheavals. Great expectations among contemporaries in early 1848 were followed almost everywhere by disappointments and bitter despondency. France initially seemed on the way to becoming a social republic, and perhaps to bringing revolution to other countries, as it had in the 1790s, but it soon became evident that revolutionary French armies would not be invading the rest of Europe and that the radical left lacked wide support outside Paris. The forces of reaction in France triumphed in 1848 in a matter of months. Elsewhere in Europe, too, for all the panicked flight of the older rulers and the jubilant proclamation of republics, antirevolutionary forces were soon back in power, often within a year. Still, the conservatives who reclaimed power generally did so on new terms, ones that recognized changing economic and social realities. Similarly, although a comprehensive liberal program was blocked almost everywhere on the Continent, in a more vague sense liberal ideals continued to spread and sink in.

The revolution of 1830 in France had been a mere snuffle compared to what occurred in 1848. In February 1848 there were again “three glorious days,” in which the king departed abruptly and a new government was established. Louis Philippe failed to appreciate how much he had lost support, not only among the common people but also

among various elements of the wealthier classes. Indeed, for a number of years before February 1848, Louis Philippe and his ministers seemed oblivious to the ominously changing reality around them.

When, on February 21, a crowd of protesters was fired upon by the forces of order, killing twenty people and wounding many more, the poorer districts of the city exploded in outrage. Barricades went up in the poorer districts, and revolutionaries invaded the Chamber of Deputies, dispersing the deputies and immediately proclaiming a republic. (The validity of what might be considered an iron law of revolution was demonstrated, as it would be again many times in the future: The incompetence, corruption, and blindness of the forces of order are more crucial than the numbers and determination of revolutionaries.)

The Republican Provisional Government and the “National Workshops”

A provisional government of ten men was quickly established, composed of seven relatively moderate republicans and three of a more radical persuasion, among them the socialist Louis Blanc, famous by this time for his book *The Organization of Work* (1839), which had offered a solution to the Social Question through the establishment of “social workshops.” These were to be state-sponsored but worker-controlled units of production that would incorporate modern industrial techniques, channeling profit to the workers, not to private owners. Such ideas were much in the air at the time among intellectuals but were only beginning to spread among the lower classes.

Similar to the physical force contingent of the Chartists in Britain were those in France who believed in a necessarily violent, dictatorial solution to the Social Question, led by a conspiratorial elite of revolutionaries. Blanc’s own hopes for a democratically elected social republic, one that he believed would be able to harmonize the interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat, were profoundly shaken by his experiences in the provisional government. He came to understand that there was no popular majority in France in favor of a social republic, especially among France’s numerous and conservative peasants. For such reasons he favored postponing elections until his socialist ideas had a chance to prove their worth. But events overwhelmed him.

The provisional government, under pressure from the leftist crowds, did establish what it termed “national workshops.” These were ostensibly inspired by Blanc’s ideas but in practice served to discredit them, developing into little more than make-work unemployment relief. There was nothing particularly innovative about them, in that comparable measures had been taken by monarchs in the past during periods of economic crisis. However, the national workshops were established on a far greater scale than ever before and quickly became a serious drain on the economy – and a source of resentment for taxpayers. By April a major confrontation was clearly brewing, when elections to the constituent assembly, on the basis of universal male suffrage, revealed how feeble the support for the left was, especially outside Paris. The executive body appointed by the new assembly included no radical republicans or socialists.

The Romantic poet Alphonse de Lamartine, in assuming a de facto leadership role of revolutionary forces in February, had proclaimed that the new republic would “eliminate the terrible misunderstanding ... between the classes.” The new republic did introduce a number of important liberal reforms, including the end of slavery in the colonies and the abolition of the death penalty, but in other regards Lamartine proved himself a bad prophet: The misunderstanding between the classes, rather than being eliminated by the revolution, was about to become far more terrible.

Rising Class Conflict and the “June Days”

In Paris a chaotic series of clashes and confrontations occurred in the spring between those who believed in a social republic and those who favored less radical paths. The property-owning part of the population became ever more alarmed at the “communist” designs of the poor on the pocket books and property of taxpayers. This alarm became panic, resulting in the declaration of martial law and then in yet another “three days” (not so glorious) – the infamous “June Days” that saw desperate street fighting between thousands of workers and the regular army. Unspeakable savagery by both sides occurred in the labyrinth of barricades that had been erected throughout the poorer districts of Paris. The death toll mounted to over 10,000, with 11,000 taken prisoner, all of whom were promptly deported to distant penal colonies.

The rest of Europe observed the events in Paris with a mixture of fascination and horror. In the newspapers at the same time were accounts of the defeat of the Chartists in Britain. Other regions lacked revolutionary capital cities comparable to Paris and London, and the revolutions that spread across the Continent in March had a great many local peculiarities. Still, the trend was similar: a rapid shift from initial revolutionary exhilaration and a panicked retreat of existing authority, followed by a conservative rebound. Similarly, the early enthusiasms and projects to aid the poor tended to provoke determined resistance from the propertied; many moderates who had initially supported the revolutionaries turned to the conservatives out of fear of the unpredictable genie of revolution.

The National Question Outside France

Outside France, however, the National Question tended to be primary, rivaling the Social Question or blending into it; the “terrible misunderstandings” in these areas had more to do with the competing and incompatible nationalist aspirations within their populations. The dramatic initial developments in some of the capital cities in March, especially Vienna and Berlin, served as inspirations, comparable to Paris to some degree in providing national focus to revolutionary activity, but there were a great many other focal points, such as Budapest, Frankfurt, Naples, Prague, Rome, and Turin. The first revolutionary uprisings of the year, in January, had been in the Italian states, not France, sparked primarily by issues of foreign rule. The events in France in February played an inspirational role elsewhere, but the subsequent house-of-cards collapse of authority throughout central Europe in the spring of 1848 was not mere imitation of

the French model but rather underlined the extent to which Metternich's system was no longer viable. Aspirations of the most diverse and often contradictory sort proliferated.

The multinational Habsburg Empire was by 1848 the second most populous state in Europe, after Russia. Revolution had quite different implications, depending on whether it broke out in the empire's western or eastern areas. In the west, revolutionaries looked to refining an already developed liberalism, primarily to benefit an educated, relatively affluent urban population. In the east, the liberating intent of liberalism was more directly literal, in freeing the serfs in areas where most of the population was illiterate and poor. The erecting of barricades in Vienna and the invasion of the royal palace in the second week of March, led primarily by university students and workers, so stunned Metternich that he immediately resigned and fled the country. At the same time, the long restive Magyars, in their Diet (assembly), passed the March Laws, which envisaged autonomy for the Hungarian half of the empire. In other parts of the empire, too, challenges to Habsburg rule proliferated. In Milan, the largest city of northern Italy and capital of Lombardy, the Austrian military garrison was driven out by the populace. In Venice a republic was jubilantly proclaimed.

Outside the Habsburg lands, mid-March rioting in Berlin prompted the Prussian king to promise a constitution. By the end of the month, the leaders of the smaller German states, facing similar unrest, had agreed to call an assembly that would represent all German states, including those not in the existing German Confederation (Bund), with the understanding that a more centralized and unified state form would emerge. That new assembly, formed on the basis of a democratic vote, finally met in Frankfurt in May 1848. This Frankfurt Assembly came to embody the hopes of German nationalists for about a year, but thereafter it came to symbolize the failures of German liberalism in satisfying nationalist hopes.

By the end of March, matters in northern Italy had already taken a violent turn when the king of Piedmont-Sardinia, the major independent state in the north of Italy, ordered an invasion of neighboring Lombardy, hoping to increase his holdings and create a powerful northern Italian state. But he started something that surprised and alarmed him: Spontaneously organized troops from Tuscany (the major state to the south of Lombardy) – and indeed from as far south as Naples – now began to march to the north, to assist in driving out the detested Austrians. These men were united by vague visions of a unified Italy, but there was little consensus about the form a unified Italian state would assume. What percentage of the population should be given the vote? Should the new Italian state would be a monarchy or a republic? Even the boundaries of a future state Italian were uncertain, since, in spite of Italy's clear natural frontiers, most Italians north of Rome had little enthusiasm for an immediate union with the backward areas south of Rome. In general, local and regional fidelities remained strong in Italy, and they would remain so well into the twentieth century.

Growing Divisions among the Revolutionaries

These March uprisings are now recognized as the most spontaneous and widespread wave of revolution in European history. But it soon became apparent in France that socialists, radicals, and moderate republicans differed on too many fundamental points

to work effectively together. Similarly, most of them lacked political experience or acumen. Of immediate importance was the fact that they could not assemble a reliable military power. The left as a whole, in France and in the rest of Europe, also did not enjoy broad or reliable popular support. Even the initial surge of support from the urban masses in Paris proved fickle, no match for trained and disciplined troops. The left in much of the rest of the Continent was even more deeply divided and inexperienced than it was in Paris. As in France, its moderate elements became alarmed by the agenda of the more radical ones, and the various revolutionary groups, liberal, socialist, or nationalist, proved unsympathetic to each other's agendas.

Many of those prominent in the early stages of revolution in central Europe and northern Italy were middle-class, educated, and respectable; they were not ready to risk their lives on the barricades. In the regular armies the officers were mostly of noble origin and the common soldiers from the countryside; neither had much enthusiasm for (or understanding of) leftist programs, and for many ordinary soldiers the leftists were simply the Devil's spawn. Thus, in most cases conservative leaders, after their initial surprise and alarm in early 1848, found that all they needed to do was wait, letting the divisions of the left ripen and the leftists' incompetence become apparent – and then call in the regular army.

It was not that simple in every area, and revolutionary hopes continued to burn bright for a year or so in a few. Habsburg armies, under a new emperor, the eighteen-year-old Franz Joseph, finally prevailed against those of Piedmont-Sardinia and the other Italian states that had risen up against Austrian rule. The radical republic formed in Rome was crushed in June 1849 – not by Papal or Austrian forces or indigenous conservatives but by troops sent from France, the initial revolutionary model, now under its new authoritarian, antirevolutionary leader, Louis Napoleon (later known as Napoleon III).

Pope Pius IX, who had shown liberal sympathies in the 1840s and was for a while considered by some nationalists to be a possible president of a united Italy, turned in a vehemently antiliberal direction after his experience with the Roman Republic, culminating eventually in his famous encyclical *The Syllabus of Errors* (1864). Among those "errors" were nationalism and liberalism – but they largely encompassed modern trends in general. The reactionary Pius would become the longest-reigning pope in modern history (1846–78).

The Magyar revolutionary nationalists, after successfully fighting off Habsburg forces, were crushed in August of 1849 by a massive army sent in by Tsar Nicholas I. The reactionary Russian tsar wanted no revolutionaries on his borders and at any rate received appeals for help from the Habsburg emperor (in accordance with the Holy Alliance, the signers of which, it will be remembered, had committed themselves to offer mutual assistance in case there arose a danger "to peace, justice, or religion").

In the many small German states, there was generally a less determined resistance than in Hungary, Prague, Rome, or Venice, but the end result – a defeat for liberal nationalism – was similar. Developments in Prussia were a bit peculiar, in that the elections initially allowed by the king returned an unexpectedly left-wing assembly, one that, to the dismay of the king and the Prussian nobility, supported Polish national aspirations not only in the neighboring areas dominated by Russia and Austria but also in those within Prussia. Revealingly, the Frankfurt Assembly

distanced itself from the much more radical Prussian assembly. Indeed, the Frankfurt delegates even applauded when the Prussian military intervened on the side of German-speakers in Posen (the formerly Polish territory absorbed by Prussia in the partitions of Poland). The Frankfurt Assembly also approved when Habsburg forces crushed the Czech revolutionaries in Prague (another area with a mixture of German- and Slavic-speakers).

The relationship of Prussia to the Frankfurt Assembly might also be termed peculiar – and finally heavy with symbolism. The Assembly eloquently if lengthily debated many issues during its first full year (from May 1848 to May 1849); by early 1849 it had decided on a unified Germany but one that would exclude the numerous German-speakers of Habsburg lands. Its members envisaged a state that would be a constitutional monarchy, and they offered the crown of the new state to the Prussian king, Frederick William IV.

Prussia was by far the largest of the German states, aside from Austria (which was less than a quarter German-speaking). Prussia was widely respected for its efficient state officials, its educational system, and its economically progressive policies (its customs union or *Zollverein*, initiated in 1818, had spread to much of Germany by 1848). The Prussian military was also no small consideration. The Frankfurt Assembly, having no armed forces of its own, had already been obliged to appeal to the Prussian king to send in his army to put down an uprising by radical elements in Frankfurt in September.

However, a rather embarrassing hitch arose in regard to making the Prussian monarch the king of a united Germany: He disdainfully rejected the offer, commenting that he could not accept a crown “from the gutter.” Most of the members of the Assembly, rather than deciding on another candidate, or possibly on a republican form of government, admitted defeat and went home. A few radical activists did try to rally the people, but they were easily put down by the Prussian army.

In 1848 a point was repeatedly driven home, in terms that observers a century later might term Maoist: Power comes from the point of a gun. A more subtle conclusion, one that also became a “historical lesson,” was that revolutionaries needed to get their act together, and to realize that student idealists, lawyers, and intellectuals are not enough to make a revolution. A perhaps even more subtle lesson lurked beneath the rhetoric of the day: Conservatives who do not lose their cool and who have a reliable army can be terribly difficult to dislodge from power.

Further Reading

Two reasonably concise biographies provide attractive introductions to this period: Steven Beller, *Francis Joseph* (1997) and Leo Loubère, *Louis Blanc: His Life and Contribution to Jacobin-Socialism* (1980).

Eric Hobsbawm’s *The Age of Capital* (1996) is rich in detail and provocative in interpretation for this period.

The classic account of the Irish Potato Famine has long been C.B. Woodham Smith’s *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845–1849* (1962). A more recent and more polemical account is John Percival’s *The Great Famine* (1998). Richly illustrated and amply covering the debates about the Famine is James S. Donnelly, Jr.’s *The Great Irish Potato Famine* (2001).

Another classic study of the period is John Saville's *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement* (1990). There are broad-ranging essays in R.J.W. Evans and H.P. von Strandmann, eds., *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848–1849* (2000).

An older biography that explores both the life and the times of Pope Pius IX is E.E.Y. Hales's *Pio Nono: A Study in European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (2011; 1st ed. 1962).

6 Nationalism and National Unification

Nationalism in the forms that emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century might well be considered the most powerful of all the isms so far considered. Nationalism continues to haunt the European imagination into the twenty-first century. Ideologies based on social class and economic causes rivaled nationalism in modern Europe, but over time they proved less potent and durable, no doubt in part because nationalist sentiments lurked in the psyches even of social revolutionaries. Lenin's famous quip, early in the twentieth century, "scratch a Communist and you will find a Great Russian nationalist" made the point with disarming frankness.

Problems of Definition

Historians have differed about the uniqueness of modern nationalism in Europe. They have differed, too, about how far back its roots extend into the past. Something vaguely akin to modern nationalistic identities existed even in the Middle Ages, but by the late nineteenth century European nationalism had taken on some distinctive attributes, most notably in the way that modern nation-states were able to mobilize their populations around nationalist themes and concentrate power in the hands of national leaders. Emerging European nations tended to define themselves in reference to competing nations. Much of early nineteenth-century European nationalism, for example, had an anti-French quality, stressing the "spiritual" superiority of non-French nations, in contrast to the superficiality and decadence of the French. The emotional bonding of each national group had much to do with perceived threats from the Enemy,

a tendency in all isms; French nationalists, especially after 1871, focused on the Germans and the Jews, whereas the traditional Enemy had been the English.

Historians of modern nationalism have divided it into two branches, one civic-ideological (that is, emphasizing fidelity to abstract ideals embodied in written constitutions, as in the French model) and another racial-ancestral-geographic (emphasizing common origin and roots in a given land: *Blut und Boden*, in the alliterative German phrase for “blood and soil”). Dictionary definitions of modern nationalism usually include references to a sovereign nation-state whose citizens are bound together by a sense of common identity in their physical attributes (body type or “race”) and/or political principles, language, culture (often mingled with religion), and historical experience. European nationalists in the nineteenth century claimed certain territories, where their ancestors lay buried, as naturally belonging to them.

From the standpoint of the early twenty-first century, many of the nationalistic claims of the nineteenth century seem problematic, especially in their claims to a common pure race. The Introduction explored some of the far-ranging implications of the lack of geographically clear frontiers for many putative nation-states. In fact, nearly all nationalisms were to some degree irredentist – that is, claiming that neighboring territories were to be “redeemed” as rightfully theirs, despite the fact that those territories contained other national groups. A commitment to gaining (or regaining) such territories was often seen as central to the nationalist program – even when the majority of the current population in those territories was of a different nationality.

Early nineteenth-century nationalism and romanticism blended in a number of ways; for example, in the mystical belief that individuals achieved fulfillment, a sense of higher meaning, by association with national purpose. That belief ran counter in tendency to the individualism that was fundamental to liberalism, but liberalism and nationalism were also connected, especially in the early nineteenth century. The national purpose was believed by many to be part of a divinely ordained plan, again contrary in tendency to the secular foundation of liberalism; national unity for liberals tended to have less mystical appeals, among them uniform laws and economic regulations that together fostered economic growth.

Irredentist claims brought up a cluster of thorny issues, perhaps the most important of which were how to define “the people” and whether individuals from one people could join those from another. There was little consensus about those matters, but, in a period when the notion of popular sovereignty was replacing the earlier belief in a monarch’s divine right to rule, defining the people was of crucial significance to legitimizing a nation-state. Yet, given the splotchy mix of ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups in many areas, how was one to determine which were the sovereign peoples – that is, which deserved to have their own European nation-state and which did not?

Most observers by the middle years of the nineteenth century granted that the French and the Germans each constituted a people, the first with a long-established nation-state, the second without one but still recognized as having a cultural-linguistic claim to form one in modern times. In contrast, few Europeans thought that Jews or Gypsies qualified as sovereign European peoples deserving a modern nation-state. They were outsiders, not European in origin or culture; their numbers were small; and their potential military power was so insignificant that they would be unable to defend any territory they might claim. Moreover, their populations were widely scattered, not even close to a majority in

any large expanse of territory. Jews and Gypsies lacked both a peasant class and a titled nobility, whereas a peasantry and a nobility historically rooted in the land were widely considered essential components of a genuine European people.

What then about such groups as the Basques, Slovaks, or Ukrainians? The Basques were certainly a distinct group or race rooted in the land, more anciently than any other European people, but they were too few to be able to establish a viable modern nation-state, and thus it was widely concluded that they were best incorporated into a larger state, presumably Spain. The Slovaks and Ukrainians were overwhelmingly peasants and largely illiterate, speaking local dialects that were not considered genuine languages, and with little awareness of themselves as a distinct people with a history in the modern European sense. It was thus concluded that they should be absorbed into the “historical” peoples around them, such as the Magyars, Poles, or Russians. Leaders of other Slavic nationalities, such as the Czechs, with a more urban, socially diverse, and literate population, generally believed that, in order to survive and preserve their identities, they needed the protection of some larger political entity – in the case of the Czechs the Habsburg Empire – but necessarily liberalized in a way that would allow its minorities a large degree of autonomy.

It may seem shocking to the multicultural sensibilities of the early twenty-first century, but the notion of major peoples absorbing minor peoples was widely accepted as desirable in the nineteenth century. Even such liberals as John Stuart Mill could not fathom how minor peoples could even *want* to retain a traditional or premodern identity, which he associated with insularity, superstition, and poverty, when they had the option of embracing higher, more civilized languages and cultures. It was widely observed that in France many non-French peoples or races, such as the Alsatians (Germanic), Bretons (Celtic), and Jews (Semitic), had abandoned their premodern identities and become French. Again, contrary to what might be assumed in the twenty-first century, many of them did so willingly, even with a sense of relief: They were escaping the cramped world of the villages and small towns, with their pettiness and bigotry and their overbearing priests and rabbis.

But, again, could a member of one *race* decide, by an act of will, to become a member of another race? What is often misunderstood is how fluid and imprecise the word “race” was in the early nineteenth century. Thus, it was considered possible that various races could blend into others, in some cases constituting a new race. It was even possible that a person could change racial identity by an act of will – if not from black to white then at least to a closely related European race. Such a definition of race differed significantly from the “scientific” definition of the word that it gradually acquired in the course of the century, referring to an unchangeable physical type with related and permanently inherent psychological traits.

In various European languages, the word “race” (*Rasse*, *raza*, *razza*, etc.) long retained significantly different connotations, but in most it meant little more than “variety,” “kind,” or “sort.” In modern Spanish, *la raza* implies something like “our kind” in a largely cultural sense, and less clearly a sense of a physically different type. Even in English, earlier nuances of the word “race” persisted in the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. Aside from referring to the “human race,” it was possible to refer to the “Christian race.” A popular hymn in Britain, dating from the eighteenth century, intoned, “Lord, I describe it to thy grace ... that I was born of Christian race.”

Similarly, it was widely assumed that it was possible to join a *people*, to switch allegiances from one people or nation to another. However, in the case of the words “nation” and “people,” the different associations from language to language grew more significant. *Volk* (German), *narod* (Russian), and *peuple* (French) each had different nuances, the Germanic becoming more exclusionary (or “racist”) than the French, for example, and the Russian more collectivist in connotation than the other two (members of the *narod* were allegedly less individualistic in tendency, more hostile to capitalism).

It was generally considered self-evident that visibly very different non-Europeans, especially those originating in distant lands, such as Africans or Chinese, could not become members of a European race. Indeed, it was asserted by some observers that it was impossible for non-Europeans even to pronounce European languages correctly, because of their physically different racial nature (in their lips, tongues, and brains).

Ideas of German Nationality

After 1815, the French nation was generally regarded as a model for other modern nation-states. Such was the case not only because it was a “hexagon” of varied geography and natural frontiers but also because of the role of popular sovereignty in its history. France in the nineteenth century became ever more a country of a single official language and high culture, as well as of universally applied laws, monetary standards, and weights and measures, all centralized in Paris. Local identities and dialects certainly endured, especially in villages and small towns, but the French model of what was eventually termed “unitary nationalism” was widely admired and copied, especially in Latin lands and on the socialist left.

However, as noted, anti-French feelings were also an important element of the budding nationalism of many European peoples. Such was the case for the Germans, who had long been politically divided and had been looked down upon as impractical dreamers, poets, and philosophers. The emerging national feelings of the Germans thus included a characteristic chip on the shoulder and a growing tendency to assert that German language and culture were not just equal but superior to those of the French. Nearly all emerging peoples engaged in such us–them theorizing (or demonizing of the Enemy). As we have seen, the Slavs and Italians under Habsburg rule focused primarily on the Habsburgs (Austrian Germans) as the oppressive other. For many in eastern Europe, especially the Poles, it was the Great Russians and the autocratic tsars who were the oppressive other.

Which positive traits did German nationalists emphasize in defining and elevating the German people (*Volk*)? Language was crucial, but agreeing which German dialect would be recognized as *the* German language presented problems. Modern linguists point out that there are no viable standards, in strictly linguistic terms, by which one can call one version of German – or any tongue – a “real” language and disregard others as provincial dialects or crippled jargons (as Bavarian, Walloon, and Yiddish, for example, were widely considered in the nineteenth century).

There were, nonetheless, reasons for considering one version of a language to be more desirable or prestigious than another, often because of literature (e.g., the Italian

used by Dante, the English of the King James version of the Bible, or the German in Luther's translation of it). But, even when a measure of consensus was reached concerning the desirable form of a language, there was then the issue of how the nation-state should enforce standards of correctness, most importantly through state-supported schools and scholarly institutes. But, until the late nineteenth century, there had never been a single unified German state to enforce such matters. Varieties of pronunciation, as well as various regional vocabularies, persisted, but *Hochdeutsch*, or High German, came to be the generally recognized standard.

Distinguishing between genuine (or the best) German and mere local dialects touched upon another major problem for German nationalism: drawing the borders of the German nation-state, since various dialects were to be found all along the borders of any such state. Complicating the issue further, there were pockets of German settlements scattered far and wide in central and eastern Europe, especially in Magyar and Slavic areas. Even as far away the Volga river in southern Russia, large populations of Germans were to be found. Conversely, inside the areas of the densest German population there were non-German pockets, most notably of Czechs, Danes, and Poles.

People, Language, and State: Herder and Hegel

No recognized authorities existed to determine which part of the population, or which languages and dialects, belonged to which race or people. There were, however, a number of influential writers and theorists whose ideas did tend to suggest such links. Among them, Johann Gottfried von Herder stands out as the most influential. He was one of many German Romantics who expressed a distaste for French domination and for the related cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment. He argued that it was only through a deep emotional attachment to the people into which one was born – and a life-long immersion in its language, culture, and history – that individuals reached the kind of self-confidence necessary for genuine creativity. The unique genius of each people, what Herder termed *Volksgeist* (literally “people-spirit”), should be cultivated and celebrated, not mocked or repressed as it often was under French rule. Herder's ideas blended with the efforts to collect the folktales of the common people, especially the peasantry, where it was believed the most authentic and uncorrupted German feeling was to be found.

Most histories of racism point to Herder as an early progenitor of what evolved into racist nationalism and ultimately Nazism, but Herder's concept of *Volksgeist* was not racist in the sense of considering material determinants or physical differences as essential; *Geist* refers to spirit, not body. Herder's writings were, moreover, egalitarian in tone, stressing German uniqueness but not superiority to other peoples. Partly for such reasons, his ideas were widely embraced outside Germany by other nationalists, especially in Slavic lands. His writings did include much speculation about how climate, geography, and historical experience worked over the centuries to form a *Volk*, but his thought was more belletristic than scientific, with special emphasis on language, literature, and historical traditions. In addition, one senses less anger and more benevolence in his work than in many later racists, though he was undoubtedly resentful about French influence and arrogance.

An even more influential German thinker, of the next generation, was the philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, whose thought was wide-ranging and subtle if at times monumentally obscure. More will be said about him when considering Karl Marx, but the relevant point about his thought in regard to the emerging nation-states of the nineteenth century is that he saw them as agents of progressive change, the achievement of reason (*Vernunft*) in history. Just as many observers have detected in Herder an earlier form of racism, so many have seen in Hegel's political thought an elevation of the Prussian state to what could be termed "state worship."

This tendency was relatively moderate in the case of Otto von Bismarck, under whose leadership Germany was unified, but it found ample and notorious expression by some German nationalists, most famously the historian Heinrich Treitschke (perhaps better known for his diatribes against Jews in the late 1870s). Hegel contributed powerfully to the rising consensus that a people needed a nation-state in order to achieve fulfillment, to carry forward the cause of reason – goals, it should be mentioned, that in Hegel's philosophy inevitably entailed violence and suffering, as the old was destroyed and the new established, roughly paralleling the thought of such British thinkers as Malthus.

Herder died in 1803, Hegel in 1831, decades before the establishment of a modern German nation-state. In those first years of the nineteenth century, political activists engaged in endless discussions about how people, nation, and state were to be conceptualized. The delegates to the Frankfurt Assembly, as noted, debated those points at great length, finally deciding on what was termed the *kleindeutsch*, or "little German," solution to the issue of German unity, under a monarchy rather than a republic. The Prussian king was to be its leader, gathering in the many smaller German states in the German Bund, but not those Germans within the Habsburg Empire. (Those who believed that German-speakers in Habsburg lands should be included in a unified German state represented the *grossdeutsch*, or "big-German," solution; their numbers rapidly diminished after 1848 as the impracticality of that path became clear.)

Slavic Identities

Pan-Slavism emerged partly as a reaction to the rising aspirations of Germans in central and eastern Europe. Revealingly, it was the refusal of the Czechs of Bohemia (a western province of the Habsburg Empire) to attend the Frankfurt Assembly that served as a catalyst for the calling of the first Pan-Slav assembly, which met in Prague in June of 1848. Most of those attending came from various Slavic groups within the Habsburg Empire, although some Poles from outside the empire attended, as did some South Slavs from the Balkan Peninsula, in areas dominated by the Ottoman Empire. Most of the delegates to the Pan-Slav assembly did not oppose remaining within the Habsburg Empire (thus acquiring the name "Austroslavs"). They did want greater autonomy, but, because they feared being absorbed by the Germans (from the west) or the Russians (from the east), they were resigned to remaining "sheltered" within a liberalized Habsburg Empire, as previously mentioned, rather than being completely independent and sovereign nation-states.

In June of 1848, almost any kind of organized or formal Pan-Slavic union, even one as loose as the German Bund established after 1815, appeared a remote prospect for several reasons. Slavic Europe was characterized by greater religious and linguistic diversity than

Germanic Europe. An especially large and bitter difference existed between the Catholic Poles and the Orthodox Great Russians. The overriding aspiration of Polish nationalists in the early nineteenth century was to free themselves from the grip of tsarist autocracy and undo the partitions of their country. Moreover, Pan-Slavism for the Great Russians involved expressions of a protective sympathy for their “little brothers” to their west and southwest, against the Germans, Magyars, and Turks. The Poles were not interested in such protection; for them the Russians were more like a big bully than a big brother.

It was revealing of the many paradoxes of Slavic nationalism that one of the leading and most influential proponents of Czech nationalism and of Austroslavism, the historian František Palacký, first wrote his history of the Czechs in German, which was the language that most educated Czechs read best at that point (1836). Czechs in the early nineteenth century, the most urbanized of the Slavic peoples, generally revered German high culture while dismissing Russia as hopelessly reactionary. In general throughout central and eastern Europe, Germans tended to be respected culturally but feared politically by Slavs, whereas Russians were even more feared politically and little respected culturally. The crushing of the Hungarian revolt in 1849 by tsarist troops entrenched the general apprehension that tsarist autocracy could be expected to block any progressive evolution of the peoples on its borders.

Nationalist stirrings comparable in texture and sophistication to those in Czech or Polish areas came relatively late to Russia itself. By the 1830s a diffuse movement that became known as Slavophilism did begin to take shape. Later in the century, in the writings of the celebrated novelist and essayist Fyodor Dostoevsky, this trend received one of its best-known expressions. For Dostoevsky, the more spiritual Slavic soul, the more generous and cooperative qualities of the common people (*narod*), needed to be cultivated and protected from corruption by the west. Nonetheless, many Russian intellectuals were intimately familiar with and respectful of German high culture.

Southern Europe: Latin Identities

Spain had been formally united since early modern times, but in the first half of the nineteenth century it fell far short of being a successful modern nation-state, especially in terms of popular support, administrative consolidation, and military power. Spain had near-perfect natural frontiers, and thus the goal of geographical union was not a major concern for Spanish nationalists. Similarly, irredentist claims on neighboring France and Portugal were relatively unimportant. However, demands for regional autonomy or even independence, especially in Catalonia and the Basque areas, remained major issues into the twenty-first century. The main concern of Spanish nationalists in the nineteenth century was to reverse Spain's calamitous decline from the heights of the *Siglo de oro* (golden, seventeenth, century), but the country's modernization long remained sluggish, much of its population poor and illiterate. As noted in Chapter 2, Spain was not counted among the major powers at Vienna, or indeed at any time in the following two centuries, though in the late twentieth century it began a remarkable revival under the auspices of the European Union.

Another previously glorious but now poor and downtrodden people, the Italians, also enjoyed natural frontiers and dreamed of a *Risorgimento*, a resurgence that would

recapture former glories. How much those dreams actually filtered down from the educated few to the mass of rural residents is uncertain, but a great deal of what was considered essential to a modern people was lacking in Italy. By the 1860s, well over 90 percent of Italians spoke mutually incomprehensible local dialects. Similarly, the modern concept of race was not a unifying one in Italy. While a sense of having descended from illustrious ancestors was widely present, so was the understanding that over the centuries peoples from other areas of the Mediterranean had mixed so abundantly with the indigenous people of the Italian peninsula that the notion of a pure Italian race made little sense. Many northern Italians thought of southern Italians as constituting different, inferior races.

In the early nineteenth century, in spite of a brief period of quasi-unity under Napoleon, the long-separated regions of north, central, and southern Italy had retained only the vaguest sense of a common identity. And, although the Italian peninsula provided unusually clear natural frontiers, Italy's geography in other ways divided Italians, in that the Apennine Mountains, running down the center of the peninsula, contributed to the isolation of villages and towns distant from the coastline.

In the nineteenth-century Italian case, the term "imagined community" of national identity is particularly suggestive. And, insofar as notions of that imagined realm began to spread, there was probably no single figure more important than Giuseppe Mazzini. Born in 1805, two years after Herder's death, Mazzini blended the German theorist's ideas with those of others, in a highly readable style – but in French. Mazzini was one of those who saw a mystically redemptive mission in nationalism, and by the 1830s and 1840s he was much involved in an underground of nationalist agitation. He was the founder of one of the largest and most influential of them, Young Italy (*La Giovine Italia*), which plotted armed uprisings to drive out the Austrian occupiers. Although he became an inspiration to many Italians, Mazzini's initial efforts were failures, some pathetically so, and he finally became yet another symbol of the political impotence of the Romantics.

His contemporary, Giuseppe Garibaldi, was even more famous as a colorful, charismatic man of action. He was the most widely admired nationalist revolutionary of the nineteenth century, the epitome of the Romantic hero, active in both Latin America and Europe. He found a practical counterpart in Count Camillo di Cavour, who served as prime minister of Piedmont-Sardinia from 1852 to his death in 1861 and is generally considered the founding father of modern Italy. A man of noble origin but with the habits and tastes of a no-nonsense businessman, he introduced a wide range of liberal reforms to his country, while encouraging commerce and modern industry. He was not among Garibaldi's admirers (the feeling was mutual), but it is hard to imagine the unification of Italy without the peculiar talents of both.

New Power Relations in Europe: The Wars of Mid-century

Both Garibaldi and Cavour benefited from the shifting power relations in Europe. The revolutions of 1848 had put much into question, and, even after the antirevolutionary surge of 1849–50, the future of the concert of Europe was anything but certain. The numerous wars from 1854 to 1871 and the emergence of a united Italy and Germany marked a period when that concert, or the ideal of mutual consultations among the

great powers, was largely ignored. What eventually emerged, in the four to five decades after 1871, was a new kind of balance of power, with new alliances and a major shift in the relative strengths of the major continental powers, Germany rising the most and Russia declining or at least not keeping up.

France of the early 1850s, under Napoleon III's leadership, seemed to be taking up anew the role of Europe's trouble-maker, but this time not by sending out armies chanting the Marseillaise. Napoleon had a more subtle and ambiguous vision: he favored a range of "modern" ideas, among them a new system of nation-states, beginning with a unified Italy. Actually, Napoleon's goals in the 1850s, in domestic as well as foreign policy, lacked clarity and consistency. He had, like his uncle, begun by repressing the left and establishing a dictatorship based on vague promises but impressive electoral successes. In 1849, the new Napoleon's right-wing inclinations seemed all too obvious when he sent troops into Italy to repress the Roman Republic, restoring Pius IX. But those initial moves seemed to be contradicted by the way that his foreign policy in the early 1850s edged toward more modern, progressive perspectives by exploiting the weaknesses of the two principal antimodern powers, tsarist Russia and Habsburg Austria.

In 1854, Napoleon joined Turkey's side in the war between Turkey and Russia that had begun in 1853. He was able to enlist Great Britain and Austria as well, each of whom had their own long-standing reasons for wanting to counter Russia's efforts to expand into the Turkish Empire (already being termed a "sick man"). The expanded war became known as the Crimean War, since its fiercest battles were largely confined to the Crimean peninsula in the Black Sea (Russian territory). However, Austria also moved troops into Wallachia and Moldavia (the two provinces, west of the Crimea, that would join to become Romania in 1859). The war turned out to be a sickening fiasco; some 750,000 military deaths were registered, a large percentage of them not directly the result of combat but rather of disease and inadequate care for the wounded. It was largely because of those problems that Florence Nightingale was able to persuade authorities to let women act as army nurses. A related "modern" development of both immediate and long-range importance was the role of journalists in reporting on this war. They had much to report in terms of inept leadership and callous disregard for the welfare of the common soldier. Wars would never be quite the same after female nurses and reporters began to participate in them.

Russia was profoundly humiliated in this complex conflict. Nicholas I died in 1855, and his successor, Alexander II, sued for peace, thereafter embarking on a comprehensive program of internal reform. A congress of all the great powers was convened in 1856 at Paris, in what might be considered a weak reassertion of the concert of Europe idea, recognizing the need to fashion a peace that would satisfy a wide range of competing interests.

The Crimean War and the Paris peace settlement of 1856, while hardly among the most widely remembered events of the nineteenth century, can be seen as important catalysts for many subsequent developments, in particular setting up conditions favorable to the creation of new nation-states. The Paris settlement addressed the issues that gave rise to the conflict but also implied a refashioning of the principles governing relations between the major powers. Cavour had brought Piedmont-Sardinia in on the side of those attacking Russia, in part because he hoped to influence that refashioning. Central to his calculations were the contacts he had made with Napoleon III. In the spirit of realism that came to prevail after 1848, Cavour reasoned that, without the aid of a major power, which meant France, Italians could not hope to dislodge the Austrians from the

peninsula. He found a ready listener in Napoleon, to whom he secretly revealed his plans for provoking war with Austria. In his early twenties, Napoleon III (b. 1808) had himself participated in anti-Habsburg conspiracies. Moreover, like his famous uncle, he had sentimental attachments to the notion of *Risorgimento*, since the two were themselves of Italian origin. (Ironically, however, Corsica – where the Bonapartes, or the Buonaparti, had originated – never became part of a united Italy but remained under French rule.)

The Unification of Italy

In 1859, Cavour did succeed in provoking Austria to declare war on Piedmont-Sardinia, and Napoleon, following the secret agreement he had made with the Piedmontese leader, sent French troops into Italy. In two celebrated battles, at Magenta and Solferino, French and Piedmontese forces prevailed over those of the Austrians. But thereafter things began to go out of control, at least from Napoleon's perspective. As in 1848, revolutionary Italians to the south and east, inspired by Austria's defeat, rose up and overthrew their own governments. Napoleon was not comfortable about appearing to be the cause of such revolutionary uprisings, especially since French troops were still stationed in Rome to protect the reactionary pope.

Napoleon then dumbfounded Cavour by making a separate peace with the Austrians, one that awarded Lombardy to Piedmont-Sardinia but left Venetia under Austrian control. The betrayed Cavour, believing his life work in ruins, contemplated suicide, only to die of natural causes a year later, in 1861, at age fifty-one. As it turned out, the nationalist flames he had helped to ignite were not easily quelled. In a series of plebiscites, the aroused people of Tuscany, the Romagna (to Tuscany's east), and the smaller states directly south of Lombardy overwhelmingly embraced annexation to Piedmont-Sardinia.

Pius IX, whose lands included the Romagna, angrily excommunicated the leaders of the revolts, but to no avail. In 1860, representatives from these states met in Turin, the Piedmontese capital, to constitute a new parliament under an enlarged monarchy, with Victor Emmanuel II as king. The British promptly recognized the new Italian state as a kindred liberal monarchy. Napoleon, too, finally acceded to the changes, but he exacted a price: Savoy and Nice, regions on the French–Italian border formerly held by Piedmont-Sardinia, were annexed to France. (Plebiscites in those regions, at any rate, registered heavy majorities in favor of joining France rather than Italy.)

This was but a first step in the direction of uniting the entire Italian peninsula. Outside the new kingdom were the remaining papal states, and in the south the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, under a Bourbon, ruling from Naples. The next steps were even more dramatic, this time spurred by Garibaldi. He had rallied the Thousand (also called the Red Shirts), and launched an initially improbable but finally dazzling military campaign, working his way from Sicily up the peninsula, gathering more followers as he progressed. The corrupt and unpopular Kingdom of Two Sicilies collapsed.

The potential for a catastrophic confrontation between Garibaldi's revolutionary republicans and Cavour's moderate monarchists loomed, to say nothing of a possible clash with the French troops still guarding the pope in Rome. But these confrontations were averted, largely because Garibaldi, though long known as the archenemy of kings, agreed to recognize Victor Emmanuel rather than insist upon a republic. Some of his



Map 6.1 Unification of Italy.

followers were outraged but finally accepted his lead. In a scene widely reproduced in papers of the day, he and the Piedmontese king rode together in a carriage through the streets of Naples, to the cheering of crowds in the city. Most of Italy was thus united in 1861, although Venetia in the northeast still remained under Austrian rule, and the area immediately around Rome was still under papal jurisdiction. Those two areas would be added in 1866 and 1871, at the same time as the unification of Germany.



Map 6.2 Unification of Germany.

The Unification of Germany

The unification of Italy was a powerful inspiration to nationalists in other areas, but the unification of Germany turned out to be a much more significant development. It was one that also differed from the Italian model, perhaps most of all in the extent to which Prussia relied on its own military might to humble first Austria and then France in brilliantly executed wars. Bismarck became the chief minister of Prussia in 1862, a year after Italy's

unification and at a point when the king of Prussia and his liberal-dominated parliament were at loggerheads, mostly over the issue of financing an expansion of the military.

Bismarck was first and foremost loyal to his king, and was known as a conservative east-erner (or “East-Elbian” – that is, residing east of the Elbe river), hostile to the moderate liberal businessmen coming mostly from Prussia’s western territories. He affected the stern manner of the Prussian nobility, or Junker class. He was known, too, for his iron will and supreme self-confidence. Even more than Cavour, he had no use for revolutionaries, republicans, radical democrats, or socialists. In spite of the extent to which he eventually became an icon of German nationalism, his deepest fidelities were to Prussia, its king, and its Junker leadership; he looked upon many German nationalists with suspicion, given their bourgeois origins and leftist inclinations. Similarly, insofar as German nationalists hoped for the unification of all German-speakers, including the numerous Catholics of the south, Bismarck perceived in this a threat to Protestantism, again an essential element of his own Prussian identity.

Bismarck prevailed against the liberals in the Prussian parliament between 1862 and 1866 by simply collecting the taxes they refused to appropriate officially. The obedient general population paid them, and the weakness of German liberalism became ever more manifest. Prussia’s army was significantly enlarged and reequipped. In his exchanges with his liberal opponents, Bismarck became notorious for his forthright elevation of *Macht*, the power of the Prussian state. In words that became famous (or infamous), he stated that “Not by speeches and majority votes are the questions of the day decided – that was the great error of 1848 and 1849 – but by blood and iron.” The German term *Realpolitik* came into special prominence in these years: no more airy ideals about human motives but rather “reality,” defined as respect for material force in the name of protecting and enhancing the power of the state. No moral code applied in the relations between states.

In the unification of Germany, Bismarck combined shrewdness, duplicity, and ruthlessness. His initial expansionist foray was modest, in opposition to Denmark over the neighboring province of Schleswig, which had a mixed German and Danish population. He was able to gain Austria’s support for Prussia’s cause, and together Prussia and Austria easily defeated Denmark. But Bismarck then deviously exploited differences between Prussia and Austria over the administration of Schleswig and neighboring Holstein, while negotiating with other European powers in order to isolate Austria.

Once on to his game, the indignant leaders of Austria were able to get the support of most of the German Confederation against Prussia. But in vain: The expanded and modernized Prussian army challenged both Austria and the Confederation, defeating them in what came to be called the Seven-Weeks’ War in 1866. Bismarck then quickly negotiated a peace agreement while the rest of Europe’s major powers were still rubbing their eyes in amazement.

In the peace settlement, Prussia annexed Schleswig-Holstein outright as well as the entire kingdom of Hanover. In the following year, 1867, Bismarck fashioned the North German Confederation, combining the enlarged Prussian state of 1866 with some twenty-one other German minor states. He supplied this new Confederation with a constitution that placed the Prussian monarch at its head, but he also introduced universal manhood suffrage for the lower house, or Reichstag. Bismarck surprised and angered both his former Junker supporters and his liberal former opponents, but he also rallied German democrats and socialists, previously among his most unyielding opponents.

The rough parallels with the first steps of Italian unification are obvious, but one very large difference soon emerged: Napoleon was about to see his “doctrine of nationalities” explode in his face. Bismarck not only took on France militarily but was also able to make it appear to the smaller German states that France was the aggressor, thus rallying those states to Prussia’s side in an anti-French war. Again, it all happened with dazzling speed and effectiveness: France was first isolated diplomatically and then defeated militarily within a matter of weeks, though formal hostilities lingered for a number of months more.

A new German Empire or Reich was proclaimed, in the glittering Hall of Mirrors at the palace of Versailles. The Prussian king became the Kaiser (emperor), with a constitution based on that of the North German Confederation. Bismarck demanded the annexation of Alsace and much of Lorraine, two areas on Germany’s southwest border that his generals considered vital to the future defense of the new German Reich. In addition, he imposed an indemnity of 5 billion gold francs on France for having started the war. That was a huge sum, far exceeding what had been demanded of France after the first Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo. Italy, having already taken advantage of Austria’s defeat in 1866 to annex Venetia, now took over the remaining papal lands, since the French troops there had been moved to the northern front in France. The pope, seething, was left a small enclave in Rome, the residence of popes thereafter.

Paris was surrounded by the Prussians. As a final peace was being negotiated, France’s capital city would be the scene of uprisings and horrific civil war, to be described in Chapter 8.

Further Reading

Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006) covers much more than European nationalism and has been extraordinarily influential. See also Eric Hobsbawm’s *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (2012).

On the broader diplomatic background to the unification of Italy and Germany, see David M. Goldfrank, *The Origins of the Crimean War* (1994). Mark Bostridge’s *Florence Nightingale: The Making of an Icon* (2008) is lengthy (650 pp.) but also an able and engaging account of an extraordinary woman and her times.

Other relevant biographies of the period are G.O. Kent, *Bismarck and His Times* (1978); Denis Mack Smith, *Cavour: A Biography* (1983); and Christopher Hibbert, *Garibaldi: Hero of Italian Unification* (2008).

Also recommended are the ample chapters devoted to German unification and its background in James J. Sheehan’s *German History, 1770–1866* (1989) and Gordon Craig’s *Germany, 1866–1945* (1978).

On race and racism in the nineteenth century, see Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (1996).

7 Mid-century Consolidation, Modernization

Austria, Russia, France

The formation of new Italian and German nation-states was among the more prominent of the developments of the two to three decades following the revolutions of 1848, but in those decades nearly every state in Europe came to believe in the necessity of modernization and consolidation. The challenge was greatest in the multinational empires of Austria, Russia, and Turkey, since they were the least modernized. At the other end of the spectrum, France, the model modern nation, had seemed for a while on the edge of self-destruction, with the violent social conflict in the June Days of 1848, but thereafter it also moved toward greater internal consolidation and modernization, though in ways that violated many liberal norms, while suggesting new, ominous nuances of meaning for the term “modern.”

The Habsburg Empire

The Habsburg Empire was one of the great losers of the 1850s and 1860s, first through the designs of Cavour and Napoleon III and then, more decisively, of Bismarck. It seemed that the breakup of the empire was inevitable if the nationalist contagion continued to spread. But the empire survived until the end of World War I. It revealed a number of previously unappreciated strengths and was not quite so doomed or sick as many believed, prompting the historian Joachim Remak to term it “the healthy invalid.” It was, first of all, not the case that every one of the many nationalities of the Habsburg Empire hoped to establish its own separate nation-state. As we have seen, the Austroslavs looked for greater autonomy and more respect for their cultures and languages within a liberalized but still extant empire. They recognized that independent Slavic mini-states



Map 7.1 Languages and ethnicities of the Habsburg Empire.

would be utterly vulnerable to the powerful Russians to the east and the Germans to the west. Poland's partitions were the worst-case scenario that other Slavs kept in mind.

There was the further problem that the many Slavic peoples of the Habsburg Empire were too scattered and diverse in identities to contemplate anything like a sovereign modern nation-state. Many of the German-speakers of the empire did not favor its dissolution either, largely because they occupied most of the positions at the top, in government, business, military, and education. The German presence was termed *Besitzstand*, literally "possession condition," or vested rights, and reflected a centuries-old situation. That situation was not nationalistic in the sense of looking to an integral nation-state, but it nonetheless tended to satisfy, or at least not aggravate, German national feeling. Especially after the formation of Bismarck's Reich and the collapse of any hopes for an all-embracing or *grossdeutscher* German nation-state, the dominant Germans of the Habsburg Empire tended to reassert their identity as the ruling elite, to a sense that they had a higher mission in providing the benefits of German rule and civilization to others.

Again, while certainly galling to many non-Germans, that mentality was not quite so widely repellent as twenty-first-century readers might assume, especially in the case of some of the smaller or more isolated nationalities. The Slovenes, a small South-Slavic group along the north of the Adriatic Sea, were known to be especially favorable to German culture and language, even while preserving their own. A large and growing percentage of the Jewish population, while retaining a sense of Jewish ethnic and religious difference, went much beyond the Slovenes in their embrace of both German language and culture. The more secular and urbanized of the Jews in the Habsburg Empire, especially in its western, urbanized areas, readily accepted the belief that German language and culture were the highest form of contemporary civilization, certainly in their minds far higher than Yiddish language and culture, which were associated with the poorer and generally more religious Jews of Galicia and the eastern areas of the empire. Moreover, German language and culture were the means to economic upward mobility and social respectability.

Emperor Franz Joseph gradually gained the respect and even affection of a significant part of the population, especially by that part that he came to call "my Jews" (condescending, no doubt, but not seen as offensive by most Jews). He was, to be sure, a limited man, living in a isolated world of haughty aristocrats and courtly pomp, instinctually repelled by modern times. Yet somehow he did not attract the kind of suspicion and hostility from Jews that the tsars of his day did. The fact that the Jews had no territory that might split off from the empire was appreciated by Franz Joseph. He found them "state-sustaining" and productive, rather than destructive and exploitative. And a significant part of the Jewish population was unquestionably modernizing and innovative, contributing to the empire's productivity in ways that few other of its various ethnic groups did.

For a number of years immediately following 1848, the Habsburg Germans' sense of mission translated into a radical centralization of the power of the state, using German language and German efficiency. There was a "liberal" or at least progressive aspect to that sense, even while not encouraging popular participation. The abolition of serfdom in 1848–9, for example, was not reversed in following years, which required a strong hand by state officials, given the resistance from many large landlords and former beneficiaries of serfdom. The state, similarly, sponsored such business-friendly measures

as the building of railroads. Of course a lingua franca, a common language of commerce (that is, German), could be seen as another important element of economic modernization.

From the standpoint of commercial and industrial expansion, the empire had yet another advantage, in that it formed a natural economic area in the Danubian basin, an advantage that would be sorely missed after 1919, when the free-trade area of the empire was broken into a number of small and economically protectionist nations, none of which was large enough to establish a diverse, well-balanced economy. The economic utility of the empire tended to impress those who looked to an industrialized future, prominent among them the Marxists, a number of whom earned the term "Austro-Marxist."

The notion of German rule found its most stubborn, formidable opposition among the Magyars in the Hungarian half of the empire, who, it will be remembered, had briefly established an independent state in 1848. Like the Germans in the western half, they were the preeminent ethnic or language group in the eastern half, but, also like the Germans in the western part, they constituted less than a majority, around a third of the overall population in the Kingdom of Hungary. The Magyar yearning to be free of German domination can be seen as a bit hypocritical, since the Magyars faced numerous other minorities who were agitating to be free of *them*, most prominently the Romanians to east, the Slovaks to the north, and the Croats to the south. Moreover, there were major German-speaking pockets throughout the eastern half of the empire, and perhaps half of Budapest's population was German-speaking. Magyar leaders were haunted by passages in Herder suggesting that the Magyars might disappear in the future, absorbed by the Germans or others.

By mid-century, the nationalist leader of the Magyars, Lajos (or Louis) Kossuth, had come to rival Mazzini or Garibaldi in fame as an eloquent nationalist freedom fighter against Habsburg oppression. After March 1848, the efforts by Habsburg armies to bring the Hungarians into line surged and receded, with no clear victors. In April 1849 the Hungarian assembly took the step of formally deposing Franz Joseph (at this time young and untested) and electing Kossuth as governor-regent. But Hungarian formal independence did not last long, as previously noted, since the troops of Tsar Nicholas I intervened. Kossuth again went into exile, this time permanently. His support within Hungary was weakened by factional hostilities and his own overbearing manner. It is uncertain on which terms he could have continued to rule even if the tsar's army had not intervened.

In the repressive period after 1849, Magyar aspirations to independence simmered. Kossuth gained further fame in exile through his bitter anti-Habsburg agitation, especially in Great Britain and the United States, where he found much sympathy. Over the ensuing years of repression, leaders in Vienna gradually arrived at the conclusion that some sort of accommodation to Magyar sentiments was necessary. More generally, after all of the setbacks experienced by Austria, from the Crimean War to Italian unification and the defeat at the hands of Prussia, Austria's leaders were pushed to the recognition that the national principle and the broader mandates of modernization could not be ignored.

The form that recognition took was a remarkable one, with no real parallels or precedents in European history. Known as the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867, it created a dual nation-state, thereafter known as Austria-Hungary or the Dual Monarchy

of two adjoining parliamentary monarchies, incorporating many liberal principles. The details of the Compromise are not easily summarized, but in essence the new constitution allowed the Germans to continue governing the western half of the empire (though not as autocratically as before) and the Magyars the eastern half (thus free of German domination).

German remained the language of administration in the western half, but Magyar replaced it in the eastern half. Franz Joseph remained as emperor and as the king of Hungary. Each half had its own parliament, with delegates from each meeting together in one body in alternate years in the two capital cities, Vienna and Budapest. There were common ministries of finance, foreign affairs, and defense. The German-dominated half did not follow Bismarck's lead in introducing universal manhood suffrage. Instead it introduced a complex voting system that did not even approximate the ideal of "one man, one vote" until 1907. The Magyar-dominated half was even less democratic; by 1914 only about a quarter of adult males had been given the vote. Ministerial responsibility to the two parliaments existed in principle but in practice never matched the English model.

A sarcastic commentator remarked that the Dual Monarchy allowed the Germans and Magyars each a free hand in "dealing with their own barbarians." The main losers in the new arrangement were the Slavs – the "barbarians" who would grow ever more restive for the next half-century. There was also large block of unhappy Romanians in the Hungarian half and a small pocket of Italians in the western half, in the Alto (Upper) Adige area northwest of Venice. The *Ausgleich* cannot be called a great success, especially in terms of pacifying all of its peoples, but neither can it be termed a clear failure. After 1919 many would even look back upon the Dual Monarchy with a certain nostalgia.

The Russian Empire

The Austrian case underlines how success and failure for nations can never be absolute; one needs to ask "in which regards?" and especially "compared to what?" In comparison to the other great multinational empires of the day (Russia and Turkey), Austria-Hungary might be termed a success. Russia, after seeming so threatening to other countries the first part of the century, was now clearly being passed by many of them. Its humiliation in the Crimean War, while relatively brief, occurred well inside its own territory and was even greater than that of the Habsburg Empire in its defeats at the hands of Bismarck, Napoleon III, and Cavour in the 1850s and 1860s.

Some revealing points arise when comparing the Russian Empire to the Habsburg Empire. One difference can only be attributed to Lady Luck: During Franz Joseph's long rule, four tsars reigned in Russia – all of them beleaguered, two murdered by revolutionaries (Alexander II in 1881 and Nicholas II in 1918). Compared to the Habsburg Empire the tsars ruled over vaster territories and more diverse peoples, large numbers of them illiterate peasants or pastoral tribesmen. Counting the non-European lands east of the Ural mountains (Siberia), the Russian Empire was considerably larger than all the European states combined. In the European part of Russia, west of the Urals, the Great Russians ruled over other Slavic peoples (Byelorussians, Poles, Ukrainians) but also

many non-Slavs (Finns, Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians). To the southeast, in the lands adjoining the Black and Caspian seas, there were large numbers of Muslims and other non-Christians. And of course, along its western border the Russian Empire contained far and away the largest population of Jews in the world – but also the poorest and the most turbulent.

Many argued that such a sprawling land mass and diversity of peoples could never be ruled democratically; power to the people, especially power linked to nationalist aspirations, would be a formula for chaos. Similarly, western notions of freedom and individual rights could not work for a mostly illiterate population that had little experience of them. At any rate, by mid-century, organized pressure from below was insignificant. Russia experienced no revolution in 1848. Before that, the Decembrist Revolt of 1825 (led by military officers) had been brutally crushed, as had a series of Polish uprisings.

Although Alexander II became known as the liberal tsar, he was not temperamentally liberal or pro-western, and he by no means resolved the dilemmas facing Russia: How much could “Mother Russia” follow the western model (or models, given the diverse paths of Great Britain, France, and Germany), and how much should she find her own way, her own special path to modernism? We have already seen that Slavophile thinkers such as Dostoevsky believed that the Russian people, or *narod*, had morally superior qualities that he believed were in danger of being corrupted by western egotism and materialism. In contrast, those who came to be known as westernizers argued that Russia had no realistic choice but to follow the paths of western countries, and that the Slavophile vision was based largely on illusion.

In fact, “westernization” had long been at work in Russia in the sense that in the past the tsars had built up the power of the Russian state by importing the technologies and technical experts of the west, often encountering a stubborn opposition from the native Russian population in so doing. But, as the Decembrist revolt had underlined, western contacts brought with them not only the technologies of the west but also notions of personal liberty and the rule of law. Such matters remained far harder for the tsar and his advisers to accept – but, when accepted, they were introduced by *ukaz* (tsarist decree), not in response to initiatives from the people.

Alexander’s abolition of serfdom, by an *ukaz* of 1861, came after a special branch of government had been established to study the issue and make recommendations. At that time a large part of the Russian population remained enslaved; that is, owned by others as one might own an animal or a piece of property – and in ways that were even more complete and demeaning than had been the case for the serfs of central Europe. By the late 1850s, even some conservative observers in Russia were arriving at the conclusion that serfdom had to go, for the simple reason that it was not working in simple economic terms, even for the owners of serfs.

The serf represented the antithesis of the modern liberal ideal of a free, independent, and responsible citizen. Liberal critics of serfdom believed that it perpetuated a class of seeming subhumans, sullen, dim-witted, and lacking initiative or pride of workmanship. Moreover, the serf made a poor modern soldier, which was on everyone’s minds after the Crimean War. The Russian peasant-serf, or *muzhik*, was commonly referred to in terms that resembled those applied to black slaves in the United States – the dark masses, members of a race separate from and inferior to their rulers. There were, too, some parallels in the more sympathetic representations, including the image of the

muzhik as no doubt ignorant and gullible but still generous, kind, and wise in a deeper sense, thus providing a sounder basis for the building of a just, new world than the image of the selfish, reactionary peasants of the west.

As with the emancipation of black slaves in the United States, the terms on which the Russian serfs were freed eventually became the source of bitter disappointment. They were liberated in the sense that they were no longer owned by their former masters, but they hardly became free in the way that western peasants were, since they still remained under the control of the ancient village council or "commune" (*obshchina* or *mir*), now much enhanced in power. Similarly, the former serfs were allocated land, but that land was not owned individually by them but rather by the *mir* collectively; the elders administering it assigned specific tasks to its members and redistributed land according to deaths, marriages, and births.

There was much variety and complex local adjustments to the land settlement, but giving the *mir* such powers did not enhance the productivity of the Russian countryside. In fact, traditional methods of cultivation tended to be reenforced, new ideas discouraged. Thus, the fundamental problem of rural poverty remained, in some regards growing worse, as the peasant population grew in numbers. Moreover, about half of the land had been given outright to the landlords, and even the land deeded to the former serfs involved redemption money, to be paid over many years by the *mir* to the former landowners. In short, while the large landowners were obliged to give up formal title to about half of their lands, their economic situation was not endangered. In many regards and in many areas, it was improved, since they no longer had traditional obligations to their serfs and they could develop the remaining lands they owned in a more modern way – at least potentially enhancing production – by hiring labor and paying wages, often to former serfs who did not find the land allocated to them by the *mir* adequate to survive on.

Alexander's other reform measures were better conceived (and received). Intellectuals were given more leeway and censorship made less stringent; travel to the west became easier, and controls over the universities were loosened. Jews were allowed to travel out of the Pale of Settlement (roughly, that area of European Russia taken in the partitions of Poland), and, in the general economic upswing of the time, a number of them made fortunes resembling those of the Rothschilds of central and western Europe. In probably the most widely admired and lasting of the reforms, the legal system was massively overhauled. In part, this reform was a byproduct of freeing the serfs, since now the government rather than the local landowners took over the task of administering justice in the countryside. But, in a more general way, important steps were taken in the direction of liberal ideals, by respecting the individual rights of all subjects and mitigating the long-established arbitrariness of tsarist officialdom. In principle at least, those appearing in court were considered equal before the law; trials were to be held in public, a jury system resembling that in Britain was introduced, and defendants had the right to be represented by a trained lawyer. In practice, there were many complications, later amendments, inconsistencies, and contradictions, but all observers agreed that a significant change had been introduced in terms of the rule of law as experienced by most Russian subjects.

Given Russia's deep-set despotic traditions, fashioning representative institutions could be considered the hardest nut to crack. In 1864, Alexander created a system of elected district assemblies with the charge of administering local issues such as roads,

public health, and education. Again, the notion of a local assembly (*zemstvo*) was eminently liberal, associated with a sense of civic responsibility, so unfamiliar to most Russians. Alexander balked at the next logical step in a liberal direction – that is, creating a nationwide representative body (*duma*) comparable to the parliaments of the west. Always of two minds, he came to doubt the wisdom of this flurry of reforms, and he gave a more respectful hearing to those among his advisers who feared a Pandora's box had been opened.

And those advisers undoubtedly had a point: Alexander narrowly escaped assassination in 1866, again in 1873, and yet again in 1880, only to be killed by a bomb in 1881. Liberalism, painful in its birth-pangs in all countries, seemed fated to be especially disruptive and violent in Russia.

France's Second Empire

We have seen how Napoleon III, as part of his program of sponsoring modern ideas, looked to a Europe of nation-states, initially offering an encouragement to Cavour and Bismarck that he came to regret. The modernism of his internal policy also had its ambiguous aspects. The repressive June Days had left the revolution in France in a kind of limbo. It became clear in the spring of 1848 that popular support for a social republic was not shared by the propertied, especially not by the numerous land-owning peasants of France. The assembly that drafted the new constitution decided, given the events in June, that a strong executive power was necessary. Even before the constitution was completed, that assembly sponsored elections for a president, based on universal manhood suffrage. The results were quite a shock for the left and were widely seen as symbolic of a new mood. General Cavaignac, associated with the brutal repressions of the June Days, received 1.5 million votes; Lamartine, the Romantic poet considered the spokesman of the opening days of the revolution, received a laughable 18,000. The leading socialist candidate, Ledru-Rollin, won a somewhat less laughable but still paltry 370,000. The real shock was the size of the vote for a man who had not previously been considered a leading contender, who had spent 1840–6 in a French jail, and who had been widely dismissed as a failure: Louis Napoleon Bonaparte received 5.4 million, far more than the total of all other candidates combined.

What was the explanation for Louis Napoleon's extraordinary popularity? A large element of it was simply name recognition on the part of unsophisticated voters, people who had not voted before, linked to what the first Napoleon had come to symbolize. He had established order over revolutionary chaos, saving the revolution. In addition, what has been termed the Napoleonic Legend came into play, so reassuring to the French yearning for *gloire*. That legend had been developing in the early nineteenth century and tended to blur the memory of Napoleon's harsh rule and other misadventures. The nephew, Louis Napoleon, was not closely linked to the revolutionary left – especially not those he dismissed as “anarchists” – nor with the extreme right, but he presented himself as a friend of the common people, while still being favorable to business interests. The imprecision and contradictions of his program, the way that his pronouncements cut across so many of the hard lines drawn in French political life by this time, have led some scholars to see a proto-Fascist aspect to Bonapartism at this point. Other scholars have simply described Louis Napoleon as a forerunner of modern mass politicians.



Figure 7.1 Napoleon III (by Franz Xaver Winterhalter, 1805–1873). The portrait suggests nobility and an association with Emperor Napoleon I, whereas Napoleon III was often cruelly caricatured by his contemporaries, most famously by Karl Marx. *Source:* DEA / G. Dagli Orti / De Agostini / Getty Images.

In May of 1849, a new legislative assembly, again based on universal manhood suffrage, took over. Its political complexion was overwhelmingly right-wing, mostly monarchist. But there was a large problem: The French monarchists were bitterly divided between those favorable to a return of the Bourbons and those who wanted the reestablishment of the more moderate Orleanists. In the meantime they accepted Louis Napoleon, who, with the approval of this conservative majority, quickly moved to suppress the small socialist faction in the assembly and to clamp down on the freedom of the press. By 1850, his curbing of civil liberty came down to depriving a large part of the poor of the vote. He gained approval from traditional Catholics, as we have seen, by sending French troops to crush the Roman Republic and restore Pius IX; in 1850, he moved further in a pro-Catholic direction by putting schools under the Catholic clergy.

By the end of 1851, Louis Napoleon felt strong enough to install himself as dictator in a violent coup d'état on December 2, the anniversary of Napoleon I's famous victory at Austerlitz. Some 150 opponents were killed by Napoleon's police and military in street fighting in early December, and 150,000 were arrested. The characteristic "Napoleonic" touch ensued: In elections two weeks later, for which universal manhood suffrage had been restored, voters reelected Louis Napoleon by a majority officially announced as 7.5 million in favor, 650,000 against. The elections were undoubtedly rigged, but it is likely that even in free elections Napoleon would have won a strong majority. Within a year he assumed the name of Napoleon III, Emperor of the French. (There had not actually been a Napoleon II, but, out of respect for Napoleon's son, dead since 1832, Louis Napoleon did not call himself the second Napoleon.)

France by 1852 was in many regards less liberal than it had been under Louis Philippe, or even under Louis XVIII and Charles X, especially in the constitutionalist aspect of liberalism that stipulated a legislative body to check the power of the executive. Inevitably, the widespread earlier belief that universal manhood suffrage would mean a turn to radicalism and socialism became less firm: Perhaps, after all, giving the vote to the masses could be reconciled with respect for property and privilege. Bismarck, too, introduced universal manhood suffrage in Germany. In Britain, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, Benjamin Disraeli believed in an alliance of working-class and landed aristocracy, and he was able to move the Conservative Party in that direction. To be sure, both Bismarck and Napoleon managed the electoral laws in ways that effectively disqualified significant numbers of the poorest part of the population. Similarly, the vote in Britain after 1867 still excluded large parts of the non-propertied laboring poor. Nonetheless, conservatives in many countries began to reconcile themselves to the notion that "democracy" (giving the vote to all male adults) could be consistent with the survival of conservative values and existing class hierarchies.

While Napoleon III's authoritarian government violated liberal political norms, he took measures that fulfilled other aspects of the liberal agenda, particularly those having to do with economic modernization. But existing labels were inadequate to describe the Second Empire; Napoleon's policies might just as well be termed socialistic. Like many socialists, Napoleon charged that parliamentary regimes did not represent genuine popular interests but rather special, moneyed interests. But now, he maintained, power had moved into the hands of a man who stood above social class and who appointed disinterested experts, much as Saint-Simon had advocated.

Of course, this pose of a benevolent ruler standing above the factions of society resembled the older notions of *noblesse oblige* and enlightened despotism. In ancient Rome the rulers had offered *panem et circenses* (bread and circuses) to keep the turbulent urban mob happy with handouts and spectacles. Napoleon III and his advisers fashioned modern versions of these earlier relations of rulers and common people. He recognized the appeal that pomp and pageantry had for the masses, and he introduced a glittery court life. He oversaw, under the inspired direction of the city-planner Baron Haussmann, a massive program of urban renewal, transforming Paris and giving it the general contours that remain to this day: wide boulevards, inspiring vistas, and splendid squares and parks. Many of the older, poorer areas were torn down and workers who lived there moved to outlying areas. A new water supply and sewer systems were installed, and spacious, beautiful railway stations built. Paris became, even more than before, the center of French economic life, and in that regard, too, the role of the state as director and stimulator was distinctly more important than in the British model.

Napoleon in the first years of his rule repeatedly assured the nation that he was a man of peace, but that was hardly what the name Napoleon suggested to most people. This Napoleon did not exactly initiate wars, but he was soon involved in a series of them: 1854–6 against Russia in the Crimea; 1859 against Austria in northern Italy; 1862–7 in Mexico; 1870–1 against Prussia and German states allied with it. These were all small-scale conflicts by the standards of the first Napoleon, but the last of them proved this Napoleon's undoing, as described in Chapter 8.

Further Reading

The chapters in Gordon Wright's *France in Modern Times* (5th ed. 1995) are excellent introductions to this period. See also John Bierman, *Napoleon III and His Carnival Empire* (1990).

For the Habsburg Empire see Steven Beller, *Francis Joseph* (1997), and for the Russian Empire see Edvard Rodzinsky, *Alexander II: The Last Great Tsar* (2006).

For a more general introduction, covering all three countries, see A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery of Europe, 1848–18* (1980).

8 Optimism, Progress, Science

From the 1850s to 1871

British leaders had weathered the stormy 1840s better than the leaders of most other countries, though passionate party strife was hardly banished. Still, there was no political revolution in Britain throughout the period 1815–1914, and in the 1850s and 1860s the country entered what has been termed its classic age of economic growth, effective parliamentary rule, and world influence. These decades were generally a time of growth and prosperity throughout Europe, but the British rise was particularly striking, as was the sense that developments in Britain represented the voice of the future. The British harbored a strong belief in progress and became particularly optimistic about their own future.

The French also prospered in the two decades of the Second Empire, but, as the following section of this chapter describes, their optimism was soon clouded by the disasters that awaited them in 1870–1. Their former position as the leading nation of Europe was further diminished. Both the British and the Germans were rising above them.

In these years other peoples and nations were surging forward economically and on many other fronts as never before, each with different versions of how to adjust to the advent of modern times. “Science” became something like a new religion for influential elements of European society.

The Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune

From the autumn of 1870 to the late spring of 1871, France experienced a catastrophic period of defeat and civil strife, in the Franco-Prussian War and the ensuing revolutionary upheaval known as the Paris Commune. As will be further explored in

Chapter 9, Karl Marx, in coming to the defense of the Commune, gained an international visibility that far exceeded what he and Friedrich Engels had achieved a generation earlier, in 1848, with the *Communist Manifesto*. He had also just published, in 1867, a first volume (two more would come much later) of a ponderous analysis of capitalism (*Das Kapital*) that offered a far more elaborate and “scientific” demonstration than had been presented in the *Communist Manifesto* of how the thriving British capitalist economy of the day would inevitably destroy itself and be replaced by socialism. But *Das Kapital* appeared only in German; translations came much later, an English version not until 1886. Marxist ideas spread more widely through other books and articles, and far more after the early 1870s.

Napoleon III’s last years were not happy. His health began to fail, and his efforts to establish a kingdom in Mexico, under the French empire but headed by the Habsburg prince, Maximilian (brother of Franz Joseph), soon proved ill-starred. He withdrew French forces in 1867 after five futile and humiliating years. Inside France, too, dissatisfaction with the empire was growing. Napoleon had begun to move in less authoritarian directions by the early 1860s, but the issue of how a liberal empire might have developed in future decades is moot, since his rule came to a calamitous end when he fell into Bismarck’s trap and declared war against Prussia. France’s armies were quickly overwhelmed, and Napoleon himself was captured on the battlefield in September 1870. However, no immediate peace treaty resulted, since a provisional government of national defense was proclaimed in Paris, buoyed by hallowed memories of 1792–3, when volunteer armies had rallied around the cry of *la patrie en danger!* (the fatherland in danger) and rescued the country from foreign invasion.

The city council (*commune* in French) of Paris had played a key role in rallying national defense in the 1790s. Since the 1790s a romantic aura had grown up around all aspects of the revolution, much as around Napoleon I. The revolutionary mystique, even after the shattering June Days of 1848 and Louis Napoleon’s effective repression of the left, showed renewed energies in the Paris of the late 1860s. With the collapse of the Second Empire in the fall of 1870, a dizzying array of leftist factions vied for power in the capital city, their strength enhanced by the exodus of the wealthier Parisians, who hoped to escape the war zone and who feared a return of the “popular excesses” of the early 1790s and the spring of 1848.

As in 1848, most of the activists in Paris by 1871 identified themselves with French theorists, only a small number with Marxism, but they were deeply divided among themselves, especially about the role the state was to play in the revolution and in a future socialist society. The Jacobin tradition had developed in many directions, some following Blanc and his “social workshops,” others Blanqui and his conspiratorial revolutionary elite, yet others Saint-Simon and his notion of enlightened *industriels* directing the state. Those usually included in the Jacobin tradition all believed in a key role to be played by a strong and centralized state. But there was also an anti-Jacobin vision of decentralized, self-contained units, free of state authority – thus the new term “anarchist,” the Greek roots of which suggest “without ruler or authority.”

By this time, French anarchism drew less from Fourier than from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, for some years one of France’s most influential writers. *Paris libre!* (free Paris), a prominent slogan of the Paris Commune, had Proudhonist connotations, but it also expressed the resentment by the Parisian populace that the capital city under the

Second Empire, unlike other French cities, had not been allowed its own municipal government (or commune), largely because Napoleon and his supporters feared the city's notoriously left-wing masses.

Proudhon and Marx were a study in contrasts. The Frenchman wrote passionately against political parties, bureaucracies, centralized states, and ideological system-building; the German was the ultimate system-builder, and he believed it necessary to use the power of the modern state, once conquered by the organized proletariat, to establish socialism and ultimately communism. Proudhon's vision of the Highest Good reflected his own village background; he envisaged an ideal future of small workshops and independent peasants, owners of their shops and farms. Marx frequently expressed contempt for "the idiocy of rural life"; his Highest Good assumed an urbanized, industrialized future, with collective ownership of the means of production.

Marx had often criticized Proudhon, most famously in his *Poverty of Philosophy* (a sardonic reference to Proudhon's book, *Philosophy of Poverty*), but by the late 1860s, after Proudhon's death in 1865, another anarchist, the Russian Michael Bakunin, had emerged as Marx's main opponent. The two and their followers clashed within the International Working Men's Association, founded in 1864 and later known as the First International (further discussed below).

Bismarck, after ordering Paris to be bombarded and putting the city to siege in the late autumn, insisted on national elections based on universal manhood suffrage so that he could negotiate with representatives unquestionably authorized to speak for the French people as a whole. Those elections, held in February 1871, returned, as in 1848, a strongly conservative assembly. Its implicit mandate was to accept Prussian terms, since most of France's rural and propertied population believed that further war was futile; a continuing war only promised to deliver the country into the hands of the Parisian radicals.

No doubt a large percentage of the radicals in Paris were partisans of what the French term *guerre à outrance* (war to the bitter end). Beyond that, what the revolutionaries hoped to accomplish cannot be easily described, in part because they were so divided among themselves. They seemed vaguely united by such popular slogans as "*la république sociale!*" and, as noted, "*Paris libre!*" Most of all, what united the left in early spring was a fear and hatred of the newly elected National Assembly, headed by Adolphe Thiers, a prominent politician who feared and hated the Parisian radicals in equal measure. (Marx, in his defense of the Commune, referred to Thiers as "that monstrous gnome, ... [who] has charmed the French bourgeoisie for almost half a century.") Thus, the Franco-Prussian War soon evolved into a French civil war, or a war between the Parisian radicals and the conservatives in the National Assembly, assembled outside the city in Versailles. This civil war must go down as one of the most haunting if also bizarre chapters of French history, not so much because of its brutal violence, since civil wars are only too well known for that, but because of what the leaders of the Paris Commune tried to do with the power they temporarily and precariously assumed over the city in the spring of 1871.

The most pressing concern of the Commune was military defense. The city was subjected to yet another siege, this time by the Versailles forces, and the residents of Paris experienced terrible hardships. They were ultimately driven to eat their pets, stray cats, rats, wallpaper (for the few calories in its glue), boiled weeds and grass, and the

animals of the Paris zoo. Yet, even as gunfire could be heard daily from the battles along the city's perimeter, there was an oddly festive quality to life in Paris. Lenin later termed these feverish spring days a "festival of the oppressed." Funerals to honor those who had fallen in battle against the Versailles troops became mass rituals, suggestive of those in the 1790s. Workers singing revolutionary songs sauntered boldly along the main boulevards of the fashionable districts of the inner city, from which the lower orders had been removed by the urban redevelopment of the Second Empire. Concerts and plays were organized as benefits for the wounded, widowed, and orphaned, again massively attended by the lower classes.

What the Communards believed they might accomplish in the long run remains a puzzle, for they could hardly have believed in their chances for success. For some of them, the idea of leaving their mark on history, as an inspiration for future generations, may have been what drove them on. There was much self-conscious symbolism in their actions: To popular acclaim the leaders of the Commune ordered the burning of the guillotine, abolished the death penalty, and toppled the Vendôme Column (erected earlier to commemorate Napoleon I's military victories). The revolutionary calendar of the 1790s was revived, and the red flag of Paris rather than the republican tricolor was raised over the meetings of the Commune. Some of the measures were quite progressive for the time, such as giving the vote to women (not done by subsequent French politicians until after World War II). Church property was taken over and religious instruction removed from the school curriculum. Many laws, especially having to do with rents, wages, and food prices, were passed with the intent of mitigating the hardships of the lower classes. With the departure of the propertied part of the population, the abandoned properties were handed over to associations of workers.

Whether the rule of the Commune constituted a "dictatorship of the proletariat" was later debated. Engels explicitly claimed that the rule of the Commune was what he and Marx meant by the term. Compared to the dictatorship exercised by the Bolsheviks after 1917, the Commune's dictatorship was mild, but nonetheless the level of violence and wanton destruction rose steadily in the spring. Executions of hostages by the Commune, including the archbishop of Paris, were part of an escalation of atrocities by both sides. By the last week of May, known as Bloody Week, much of downtown Paris was on fire, either set by the Communards or the result of shelling from the Versailles forces. In a legendary battle among the tombstones of the Père Lachaise Cemetery, some 150 Communards were taken prisoner, lined up along a wall, and executed. Summary executions in all parts of the city continued for days thereafter.

The final toll of dead and wounded was far greater than during the June Days of 1848, and many of those captured were sentenced to prison in the colonies. Thousands of others were driven into exile or went into hiding. Estimates of the total death toll range from 20,000 to over 50,000. There was a mass exodus of leftists from the city; some 300,000 denunciations were made to the Versailles authorities, followed by tens of thousands of further arrests. The French left would not recover for decades. It would take nearly five years before a new constitution was agreed upon. A republican form of government was finally if grudgingly accepted because the monarchists and Bonapartists could not reach agreement. Most thought of this new republic, France's third, as merely temporary, later to be converted into a monarchy. In fact, the Third Republic would last until World War II, and no king would ever again rule France.

The Classic Age of British Liberalism

Observers of the Paris Commune in other nations were appalled by its savagery and destruction. Left-leaning observers blamed the right for the violence, and the right-leaning blamed the left. British observers of all stripes could not help but gain a sense of satisfaction that their own country had taken such a different direction. By 1871 the overall mood in Britain was one of glowing self-satisfaction. In a larger sense, beyond the strictly political, that mood was hardly surprising, since, by almost any definition, the 1850s and 1860s had been excellent years for the country in terms of economic productivity but also in the peaceful relations between the working class and the owners of capital.

It was, nonetheless, not an entirely happy story. The disease and senseless slaughter of the Crimean War from 1853–6 cost the country some 60,000 lives, even if it was Britain's only major involvement in Continental warfare until 1914. The dark side of modern times, so much a concern of the Hungry Forties, had not disappeared from view, but overall the possibility of a future solution to the Social Question was viewed with a more widely shared optimism than before.

The mood of Britain's middle and upper classes in this period, first widely termed "Victorian" in 1851, was famously captured by the Scottish author Samuel Smiles in his best-selling book *Self-Help* (1859) and in many ensuing publications, with such titles as *Character*, *Thrift*, and *Duty*. In some regards, his unabashed confidence in the power of individual initiative had parallels in the ideals of the French Revolution, particularly the "career open to talent." That ideal, too, blended into the mystique surrounding Napoleon I, "the little corporal," so named by his troops because of his efforts to make them feel that any one of them might aspire to the heights he had attained. But in Britain, and especially in Smiles's representation of it, the tone was more buoyant and anti-statist, and was apparently embraced by a larger part of the population.

Smiles was eminently quotable ("men who are constantly lamenting their ill luck are only reaping the consequences of their own ... mismanagement, and improvidence"). He could hardly be counted as one of the most sophisticated thinkers of the age, though he had a readership much exceeding that of Marx or any anticapitalist writer, with the possible exception of Proudhon. ("Smiles" was his real name. He intoned, "I'm as happy a man as any in the world, for the whole world seems to smile upon me!") Smiles had been involved in the Chartist movement in the 1840s, but his negative experience in it contributed to his later pro-capitalist effusions and his unshakable belief that political solutions to social problems only made things worse, undermining as they did the all-important virtues of individual initiative and self-reliance.

Smiles was not oblivious to the sufferings of the lower orders, but he viewed suffering as the result of individual defects of character more than bad luck. He even asserted that some suffering was socially beneficial ("We learn wisdom from failure much more than from success"). In that regard, his thought merged with the deeper conviction, so central to European identity in modern times, that strife and suffering are necessary to creativity and progress. As previously suggested, an austere, somewhat paradoxical view of progress was emerging in most of Europe. Similarly, the realism of the post-1848 period,

the belief in the necessary clash of material forces, was not compatible with complacent optimism. (Recall Bismarck's words: "the questions of the day are decided ... by blood and iron.") Marx, too, stressed that proletarian suffering, class conflict, and a violent dictatorship were necessary to reach the eventual promised land of communism.

Smiles's distrust of political efforts to solve social and economic problems was shared by many prominent politicians of the day in Britain. Especially while Lord Palmerston served as prime minister (1855–65), it was widely held that the Reform Bill of 1832 had allowed Britain to reach a stage of political perfection. Thomas Macaulay, one of Britain's most esteemed historians, commented at the end of the troubled 1840s that "all around us the world is convulsed [by political upheaval] Meanwhile, in our island, the course of government has never been for a day interrupted. We have order in the midst of anarchy."

Britain's Social Peace, Political Stability, and Economic Productivity

Confrontations between the forces of order and the protesting masses in Britain in the nineteenth century were remarkably tame compared to those in France and in most other European nations. Even in the more turbulent first part of the century, the notorious Peterloo Massacre had involved only eleven deaths and some 400 wounded. Subsequent clashes in Britain usually involved numbers of that order. The celebrated parliamentary verbal duels of the Victorian era could be hard-hitting and the hostilities between leading figures fierce. William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli, two leading Victorian statesmen, were famous for them. (Gladstone to Disraeli: "I predict, sir, that you will die either by hanging or of some vile disease." Disraeli in reply: "That all depends, sir, upon whether I embrace your principles or your mistress.") But these hostilities remained mostly verbal, less likely to be linked to violence than on the Continent. That difference at least in part reflected the fact that Parliament still remained in the hands of the upper classes, men who recognized a common interest and, for all their verbal dueling, still spoke the same language, one in which wit and repartee had been honed to an impressive sharpness.

Some observers have seen an element of luck in British political stability. Just as the Habsburg Empire benefited from having one Kaiser, Franz Joseph, from 1848 to World War I, while in Russia there were four tsars, so Britain enjoyed an advantage over France, in that the British throne had but one queen between 1837 and 1901. It is unlikely that any queen or king, however intellectually gifted or genial (and Victoria was neither), would have lasted long in France, where in the same period there were three kings, a short-lived second republic, a second empire, and then another republic, with increasingly violent revolutions in 1830, 1848, and 1871. It is true that the popular veneration with which Queen Victoria's name was eventually associated developed mostly in the later part of the century. The premature death of Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, in 1861, sent her into a protracted period of mourning and withdrawal from public view, but antimonarchical feelings in those years remained relatively unimportant and unavoidably mixed with sympathy for her personal tragedy.

Britain's relative political serenity obviously derived from a range of more profound factors than having a long-lived monarch. Aside from the previously discussed flexibility of the country's ruling classes, perhaps the most important of them was the lasting ingenuity and productivity of its rapidly expanding population, especially its middle classes, linked to the unusual preoccupation of its subjects with the creation of material wealth. The Reform Bill of 1832 and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 provided a crucial framework for Britain's renewed industrial and commercial surge in the 1850s and 1860s. The textile base of the earlier industrial revolution expanded ever more to heavy industry. The economic logic of the repeal of the Corn Laws took full effect, and Britain became ever more reliant on imported foodstuffs and raw materials. At the same time the country made handsome profits in exporting manufactured products. Britain's profits accrued as well through shipping services and interest on capital investments abroad.

The years after the repeal of the Corn Laws saw an impressive expansion of British trade with the rest of the world rather than primarily with Europe. But British trade with the Continent also expanded; the Chevalier-Cobden Treaty of 1860 between France and Britain was widely acclaimed as yet another victory for the principles of free trade. That two nations that had historically been enemies had agreed to move toward dismantling long-standing tariff barriers between them bolstered the optimism of those who asserted that free trade would not only enhance economic productivity but also help to resolve national tensions.

Liberalism, Population Growth, and Democracy

The impressive industrial productivity of the 1850s and 1860s was paralleled by a continued population increase in most of Europe. The nature and origins of rapid demographic increase are not easily summarized, but they include higher birth rates, lower death rates, and mass movements of populations. Between 1815 and 1850, Britain had one of the fastest rates of population growth in Europe, in spite of the ravages of the Potato Famine and the drain of emigration to the New World. The very rapid growth of population in the first half of the nineteenth century of Europe as a whole continued in the 1850s and 1860s at an only slightly less rapid rate. Europe's experience was part of a larger story of population growth nearly everywhere in the world, from the late seventeenth century on, but Europe's rising share of the world's population showed a particular spurt between 1850 and 1939. ("Europe" in this context refers also to Europeans who emigrated to other parts of the world, especially the Americas. Of those Europeans, the English-speaking peoples grew faster and became materially more prosperous than any other major language group.)

Malthus's dour predictions (as discussed in Chapter 5) about the dangers of population growth began to seem unnecessarily alarmist, or at least out of sync with the rising optimism of the Victorian era. Before long, the French began to worry about the opposite – that France's population was not growing fast enough, since it was being passed by both Germany and Britain. Yet Malthus's observations about how population growth tended to outstrip the production of food continued to impress a wide variety of observers in this optimistic age, perhaps most significantly Charles Darwin (as further explored below).

A large proportion of Britain's expanding population was still denied the vote in the 1850s. France had introduced universal male suffrage in 1848 and Bismarck included it in the constitution of the emerging German nation-state, but many prominent figures in Britain remained wary of popular rule. Victoria archly let it be known that she would not be the "queen of a democratic monarchy," and Disraeli, a favorite of the queen, gloomily predicted that the introduction of democracy to Britain would lead to "pillage ... and massacre."

But the popular vote did come to Britain, if more gradually than in France or Germany. Ironically, the next step in that direction would be under a Conservative ministry led by Disraeli. As the 1860s developed, he changed his mind about the masses, or at least about their more sober members; he concluded that a conservative alliance of the working class and upper class against middle-class liberals was a notion of some promise. However, in the elections following the passage of the Reform Bill of 1867, which doubled the number of voters compared to those enfranchised by the Reform Bill of 1832, Disraeli's Conservative Party was defeated by Gladstone's Liberals. Disraeli resigned in disappointment and disgrace.

Disraeli's Tory democracy nonetheless did have a future. Disraeli himself again served as prime minister from 1874 to 1880, and Britain's privileged upper orders gradually reconciled themselves not only to liberal economic principles but also to democratic-constitutional liberalism (which is what "democracy" came to imply from then on in Britain and the United States, rather than direct popular rule). In 1884 another reform bill added 2 million more male voters, bringing the total fairly close to what the Chartists had demanded a half-century earlier.

The Irish Question

The Irish Question, which had flared up in such an ugly form during the Great Hunger of the late 1840s, continued to be one that sorely tested the optimism of the day. The Irish Question touched on many others. For example, in this age of national unification and consolidation, what was the "British" nation? British identity was peculiarly diffuse, traditionally referring to four "races," the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish. It would be a stretch to describe any of them as having particularly warm feelings about the others, but relations between the English and the Irish had long been especially ugly. The Scots and Welsh, Celtic people like the Irish, had their own grudges and complaints about English domination, but they were not usually as bitter in nature those of the Irish. This mixture of British races meant that the construction of modern British identity (or the nation's "imagined community") necessarily lacked the German *völkisch* aspirations to racial purity and also differed from the French ideal of an integral national style. Still, a racism not all that different in its arrogance and airs of superiority from that found in German-speaking areas evolved among British leaders as the century progressed. Ironically, one of the strongest partisans of the notion of racial hierarchies was Benjamin Disraeli, who, as a proud self-described member of the Semitic race, did not fit into any of Britain's historical racial groups. (His ancestry was Jewish, but he had converted to Christianity.)

English-Irish hostilities were by the 1850s among the worst in Europe, rivaling those of the Russians and Poles. How, then, to reconcile the Irish to "Britishness" and alleviate

their many grievances? Gladstone, taking over from Disraeli in 1868, vowed to devote his sincerest efforts to “pacifying” Ireland. For a man who claimed that “it is not by the state that ... the terrible woes of this darkened world can be effectively dealt with,” echoing Smiles, that would seem an awkward if not contradictory vow. But he did make progress in a few regards, notably in disestablishing the Church of England in Catholic Ireland, but, when he proposed alleviating the condition of the Irish rural poor by allocating plots of land to them, he ran into heavy traffic: English landlords with holdings in Ireland were not well disposed to the prospect of their tenant laborers becoming independent land-owning peasants. Those landlords made up a powerful contingent of Gladstone’s Liberal Party.

Home Rule, meaning Irish autonomy with a separate parliament but not full independence from Britain, was one possible long-range solution. A more militant nationalist faction in Ireland, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, clamored for a complete break and the creation of a sovereign Irish nation-state, linked to a program of radical land reform involving expropriation of the English landowners. By the late 1870s and early 1880s, matters again grew violent, while parliamentary debates raged. The prospect of Home Rule so divided the Liberal Party that a formal split occurred in it. Much of the English public was outraged over reports of terrorist attacks by Irish republican forces on British officials, but effort after effort to reach a compromise failed, finally bringing down Gladstone’s ministry. He returned to the task repeatedly when back in power, even in his final (fourth) ministry, in the early 1890s, when he was in his eighties. But the Irish cauldron continued to seethe, exploding again in 1914–16, and remained a major problem well into the second half of the twentieth century.

Darwin and Darwinism

The Victorian era is known as one of supreme confidence in progress, which was itself related to the palpable progress being made in scientific discovery. The material richness referred to above was accompanied by an intellectual creativity and cultural richness with few equals in human history. In countless ways, life seemed to be getting better for many ranks of society. The promises of the Enlightenment seemed to be reaching fulfillment, and “science” became a revered term; scientists were venerated in ways that saints and military heroes had been in times past – although, also like saints and military heroes, they were feared and vilified by part of the population.

The eighteenth-century poet Alexander Pope had intoned, “And God said, ‘Let Newton be!’ And there was light.” If any thinker of the nineteenth century could rival Isaac Newton in prestige and influence, Charles Darwin must be the one. However, in his case, the phrase “and God said” did not quite fit, for Darwin’s scientific findings demolished the biblical account of human origins and implicitly denied any role to a transcendent, benevolent deity. Needless to say, this dismayed and outraged many Christians of his day.

Since at least the time of the Jewish dissident Baruch Spinoza in the mid-seventeenth century, the biblical account of divine creation had been dismissed as a primitive myth by Enlightened observers. Darwin’s theories, as presented in his *Origin of Species* (published in 1859, the same year as the publication of Smiles’s *Self-Help* and John Stuart

Mill's *On Liberty*), challenged Judeo-Christian beliefs about the origins of life and the fixity of species more persuasively than any previous work. He earned widespread acclaim from mid-century intellectual elites, an acclaim that was ultimately more significant than the denunciations that also thundered down on him. Karl Marx so admired Darwin's book that he offered to dedicate *Das Kapital* to him. Darwin gently declined the honor.

The nature of Darwin's scientific contribution is often misunderstood. It was not the idea of evolution itself that was novel or shocking; the ancient Greeks had proposed something similar, and Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, had published a work sixty years earlier speculating that all species had evolved from a common ancestor. The French scientist Jean Baptiste Lamarck had suggested that species adjust to their environment and then pass those adjustments on to their progeny. Hegel's philosophy was about of the nature of change in history, or evolution, toward the achievement of reason. One might say that "change," evolutionary or revolutionary, of a beneficial and progressive nature was the watchword of an age that had seen so much of it. "Progress" was simply another word for it.

Contemporaries of Darwin, notably an older friend and early supporter of his, Charles Lyell, had observed progressive change in rocks and sediment, layers that extended back far longer than the several thousand years believed to be covered in the Book of Genesis. In short, Darwin, like so many other famous thinkers, may be seen as someone standing on the shoulders of his predecessors and surrounded by supportive contemporaries. He was proposing something that the world, or at least influential parts of it, was ready to hear. That another researcher, Alfred R. Wallace, announced findings much like Darwin's in 1855 further reinforces the point. It was in fact Wallace's announcement that pushed the modest and ever-reticent Darwin to publish his own book.

Where Darwin stepped beyond Wallace was in his meticulous presentation, worked out over many years, of what he termed "natural selection," the way that individual organisms, through random hereditary variations, were "selected" according to their ability to fight, defend, feed, and reproduce more successfully than others, leading to the appearance of new species. This process involved an eternal, desperate "struggle for existence" resulting in "the survival of the fittest" or "the most favored races," and the death and disappearance of the unfit. These concepts, by Darwin's own testimony, were ones he developed in part from reading Malthus, who had emphasized the disparity between how little food can be produced in relation to how many babies can be created. Malthus believed the result of that disparity came inexorably in human suffering – disease, drought, warfare. Darwin saw another kind of result: new, more "fit" species. And, over millions of years, the evolution of primitive organisms into highly complex ones.

Darwin implicitly touched on a range of hugely contentious issues. In passing over in silence the role of God, he seemed to his detractors to be positing a meaningless world, one of moral anarchy and human worthlessness. Darwin's concept of fitness had nothing to do with moral worth but simply with the ability of an organism to survive and produce progeny. Darwin's use of the phrase "most favored races" similarly seemed to his detractors ultimately to question human equality and Christian universalism.

One of the most common charges by Darwin's detractors was that he believed humans were descended from monkeys (see Figure 8.1). Those detractors were jumping

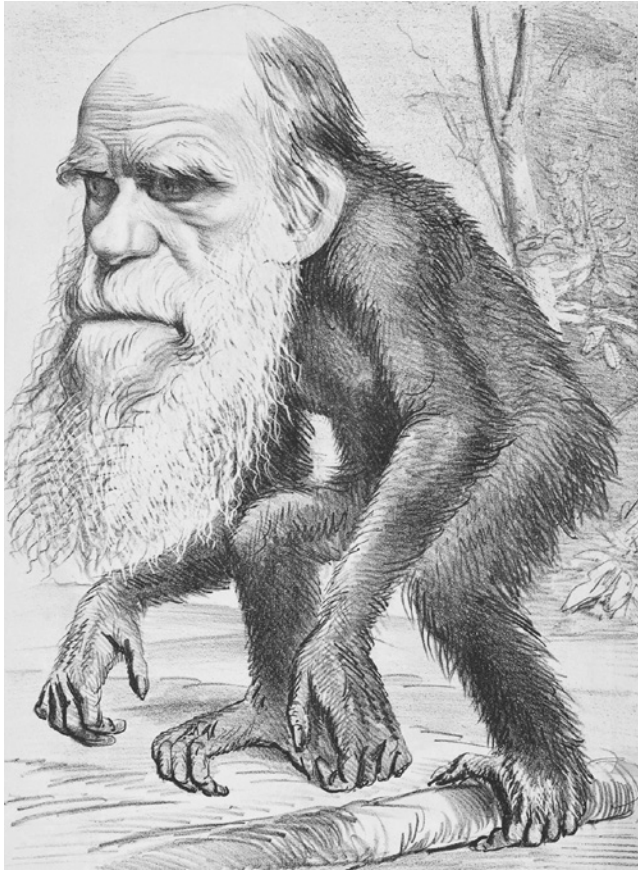


Figure 8.1 Darwin portrayed as an ape (or an “orang-outang”) in a cartoon in the *Hornet* magazine, March 22, 1871. The caption read “A Venerable Orang-Outang. A Contribution to Unnatural History.” Source: © Classic Image / Alamy.

to conclusions; he was using “race” more in the sense of variety, one notch down from species, but those detractors’ charges were not illogical. Moreover, their conclusions about the implications for human equality were entirely warranted in so far as many of those who began to call themselves Darwinians were concerned. Darwin himself did not explicitly argue that the races of humanity represented different stages of human evolution, but that was a tempting and widely reached conclusion, given the extreme range of existing human civilizations in the world, some obviously “superior” to others in the Victorian mentality. The physical differences between races long separated geographically seemed, only logically, to have intellectual parallels: Some races were inherently more intelligent than others, just as some were taller or darker than others. Darwin did claim that modern human beings were descended from earlier simian (monkey-like) ancestors. More to the point, these much earlier ancestors had not been created in God’s image and were patently inferior to modern humans in intelligence. Was it not reasonable to conclude, on the basis of Darwinian theory, that the world’s

“primitive peoples,” especially those in Africa, were closer to those simian ancestors than Europeans were?

Reasonable or not, it was just such conclusions that many observers reached. Many had reached comparable conclusions long before the appearance of Darwin's book, and they then welcomed it as a scientific confirmation of their existing beliefs. Perhaps the most influential of them, a man who has been given the title of the “father of modern racism,” was the contemporary French author Arthur de Gobineau, a close friend of Alexis de Tocqueville, the celebrated author of *Democracy in America* (1835–40). Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* appeared in several volumes from 1853 to 1855, just a few years before the *Origin of Species*. His approach was not much like the “natural science” so carefully nurtured by Darwin, and more resembled Herder's reasoning, based on linguistic and various kinds of literary evidence. Gobineau argued that the European white race was superior, especially in creativity, to the other two basic racial types, yellow and black. He further argued that, among whites, the upper classes in France were composed of a separate race. He introduced the term “Aryan” to describe those upper classes, derived from a Sanskrit word meaning “noble” (as is the modern word for Persia, “Iran”). He described the lower classes in France as resembling Africans in their low intelligence, poor control of their emotions, and proclivity to violence and destructive rioting.

Gobineau's influence on Continental racists was considerable, but it is unclear how many of those who came to be termed “social Darwinists” in Britain actually read him. An English translation of his book did not appear for another fifty years, although the gist of his ideas spread in discussions of his work in other publications. At any rate, the social Darwinians in Britain and elsewhere were a diverse group, constituting a general intellectual tendency rather than a unified theory. They were never an organized movement in the way that Marxists came to be, and not all of them were racist in the way that Gobineau was. Gobineau's particular distaste for racial mixing, which he believed led to degeneration, was a bit awkward for a country like Britain that considered itself composed of four racial types and more remotely derived from mixtures of Anglo-Saxons and Normans. In fact, Gobineau was not all that enthusiastically received in his native country. It was in Germany in the late nineteenth century that he won the most attention.

Social Darwinism consisted of the application of Darwinian ideas about nature to contemporary society. In other words, social Darwinians believed that in society as in nature there was beneficial competition and harsh selection; the “best” rose to the top and the “worst” sank to the bottom. Of Darwin's contemporaries, Herbert Spencer became the most widely read and prolific of those known as social Darwinists. He saw the marketplace as the key arena where human beings proved their worth, with the superior rising to be captains of industry and the inferior sinking to become manual laborers. It was he who apparently coined the term “survival of the fittest,” in his book *Social Statics* (1851), eight years before the appearance of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

It might be more chronologically accurate, then, to term Darwin a Spencerian biologist than Spencer a social Darwinian. Spencer's arguments might even more accurately be termed Lamarckian, since he emphasized not the role of heredity but rather that of individual adaptation and cultural evolution. But such distinctions were blurred by the fame, notoriety, and gross simplifications of what came to be understood as “Darwinism.” Malthus anticipated Spencer as well as Darwin, in content but

even more in tone, writing that “It seems hard [to accept] that widows and orphans should be left to struggle for life and die,” but he assured his readers that “when regarded ... in connection with the interests of universal humanity, these harsh fatalities are seen to be full of the highest beneficence.”

Further Reading

Robert Tombs's *The Paris Commune, 1871* (1999) is an able account of a complex and bizarre phenomenon. Gordon Wright's *France in Modern Times* (5th ed. 1995) has an illuminating chapter on what he terms “the Monarchist Republic,” following the repression of the Paris Commune.

For Darwin and the Darwinian revolution, see Jonathan Weiner's *The Beak and the Finch: The Story of Evolution in Our Time* (1994). Also, addressing broader issues, see Richard Altick's *Victorian People and Ideas* (1974) and William Rubinstein's *Britain's Century: A Political and Social History, 1815–1905* (1998).

Part III

From Depression to World War

The 1870s to 1914

Part III (Chapters 9–12) covers the period from the early 1870s to the outbreak of World War I, just under forty-five years, with an important subdivision from the early 1890s to 1914. Historians have usually presented the early 1870s as constituting a break from the previous decades for several reasons. The most obvious is Prussia's victory over France in the autumn of 1870, with both immediate implications and long-term symbolism. France's ensuing civil war in the spring of 1871 further contributed to the catastrophic defeat the country had experienced. All other powers had to take note of a rising Germany, but they were also confronted with a terrifying vision of future class conflict in the Paris Commune. The stock-market rally and then crash in Germany in the next two years had much to do with the influx of cash from the reparation payments imposed on France by the victorious Germans. The crash evolved into what was then considered a most alarming depression. The optimism of the 1850s and 1860s, both associated with *laissez-faire* economics and rapid economic growth, experienced a jolt; the 1870s and 1880s were times of relative stagnation, economic uncertainty, and a renewed interest in anticapitalist and antibourgeois ideologies.

However, Europe's economy recovered in the early 1890s, and the ensuing decades before 1914 were ones of renewed economic growth in most areas. Although Great Britain continued to be the model liberal nation, its variety of liberalism was a work in progress, never really a finished product. By 1871, two new nation-states, Italy and Germany, were established on the Continent, each reflecting limited degrees of attachment to the ideals of liberalism. France, in moving from the Second Empire to the Third Republic, was “new” and significantly if slowly liberalized. Even Russia and Austria-Hungary could be considered new and liberalized nations, however problematically.

Two new antiliberal isms, Marxism and antisemitism, are given special attention in the following chapters. Antisemitism was a late-comer, at least as an organized political movement, a new ism that was at first rather unimpressive compared to the other major isms of the day. Yet it has plausibly been termed the most “successful” ideology of modern times, in a rather perverse sense of the term. Marxism is now considered a failed ideology, but by the 1870s and 1880s its theoretical sophistication had impressed many. The rapid growth of the German Social Democratic Party, widely considered to be Marxist, gained wide attention and imitation, whereas the antisemitic parties of the same period were widely considered failures by the end of the century.

Zionism is another new ism that attracted little attention or admiration when it first appeared in the late nineteenth century. Zionists differed among themselves in important ways. Present-day scholars also differ in terms of whether Zionism is to be understood primarily as a reaction to antisemitism or, in contrast, as the expression of the national strivings of the Jewish people at a time of nationalist growth everywhere. Theodor Herzl, the recognized leader of the Zionist movement, died young (in 1906), an apparent failure, and even the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, in which the British announced that they favored the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people, went nearly unnoticed, at least in part because the world’s attention was fixed on events in Russia. Zionism came into its own only after the rise of Nazism.

Europe became a world power more than ever before in the late nineteenth century, but it also began to clash with non-European rising powers, notably the United States and imperial Japan. The United States handily defeated Spain, an old imperial power, and began to build its own empire. It did not enter into European alliances or become part of the concert of Europe, but President Theodore Roosevelt did play a major role in the peace negotiations between Russia and Japan after the war between them in 1904–5. Japan, while not a European power, concluded a treaty with Britain with implications for Europe.

The six major questions introduced in Chapter 4 (German, Jewish, Irish, Social, Woman, Eastern) took on significantly different hues between 1870 and 1914. The only one that might have been considered solved by 1871, the German Question, rather quickly morphed into a more menacing one, as leaders of the new German Reich began to demand a “place in the sun” and as Germany’s neighbors began to ally against the threat to their interests that a “too powerful” Germany seemed to pose. Home Rule for Ireland, finally agreed upon on the eve of World War I, seemed to point at long last toward a solution to the Irish Question, but again that was a false hope. The Eastern Question, too, took on a newly ominous focus in the Balkans. The South-Slav peoples there, who were in the process of throwing off Ottoman rule, were faced with the prospect of the Habsburgs replacing the Ottomans. World War I’s most immediate origins were related to South-Slav resistance to Habsburg ambitions. The Social Question, too, reemerged in violent ways, with the growth of revolutionary workers’ movements – waves of violent strikes by workers in most countries and a revolutionary upheaval in Russia in 1905. Finally, the Woman Question achieved a new visibility, both positive and negative, especially in Britain and the United States in the years immediately before 1914.

9 The Depressed and Chastened 1870s and 1880s

The optimism of the 1850s and 1860s was replaced by a more pessimistic tone in the 1870s and 1880s. The rising “isms” of these decades, Marxism, Social Darwinism, racism, and antisemitism, took on a harsher tone than had been the case in the previous two decades. The post-1848 realism and the long-standing belief in the beneficial aspects of conflict also became starker. The assassination of Alexander II in 1881 marked a particularly sharp intensification of internal tensions in Russia and a move to right-wing repression under Alexander III.

The Spread of Marxism: Controversies about the Meaning of Marxism

Marx in the 1860s had been known to left-wing activists for his role in the First International, but he remained little known to the general public. In the 1870s and 1880s, Marx and Marxist theory gained a degree of attention that had long eluded them. The stock-market crash and ensuing depression were seen as confirmations of Marx's predictions, and his defense of the Paris Commune earned him notoriety. (He observed in a letter to a friend that he had become “the best slandered and the most menaced man in London.”) The new German Reich experienced extremes of economic boom and bust between 1871 and 1873, in the *Gründerjahre*, or founding years. As money flowed rapidly into the German market from the reparations imposed on France, the stock market rallied and then crashed, accompanied by a number of stock-market scandals, further sullyng the name of capitalism in many quarters, as well as drawing

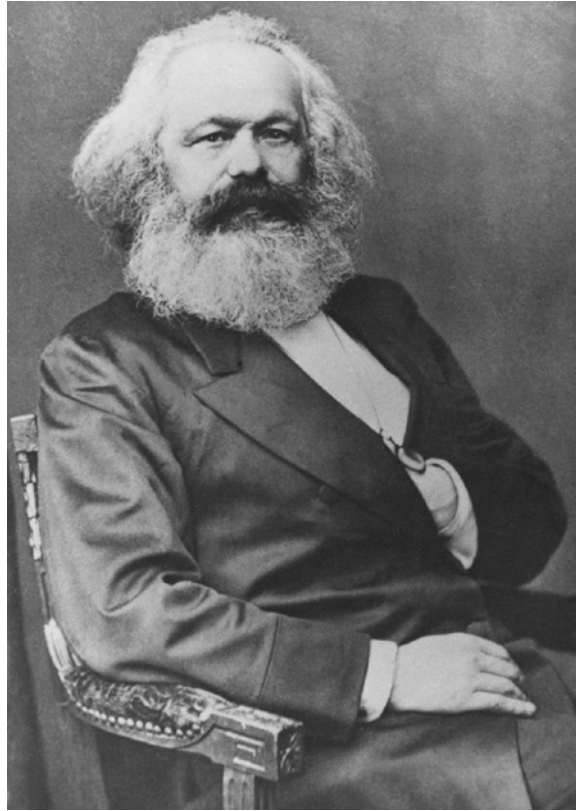


Figure 9.1 Karl Marx in his final years, in a photograph that became iconic.
Source: akg-images.

new attention to the role of Jews in modern capitalism, since a number of those accused of economic malfeasance were Jewish.

In spite of their defense of the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels welcomed Bismarck's victory over France as marking a period of enhanced respect for things German, including Marxist theory. But they had been obliged to endure some dispiriting years. Marx was in his mid-fifties, in his last decade of life (d. 1883); Engels was two years younger and would live until 1895, overseeing the publication, after Marx's death, of the next two volumes of *Das Kapital*. The Social Democratic Party in Germany (SPD, from its German initials; the full German form of this acronym, as with others, can be found in the relevant index entry) grew rapidly until Bismarck, taking alarm, introduced legislation that made it nearly impossible for the new party to function openly and forced many of its leaders into exile. But, even during the twelve years (1878–90) that Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws were in effect, popular support for the SPD continued to grow. The party would regain legal status after 1890 to become the largest, best-organized, and most rapidly growing in Germany.

The SPD also became by far the largest socialist party in the world, a model to socialists in other countries. In 1889, a new international, known as the Socialist (or Second)

International, was established, and the SPD emerged as its preeminent party, although the International attracted many socialists who were not even nominally Marxist, including anticapitalist anarchists who were emphatically anti-Marxist.

The SPD represented the unification of various socialist factions in Germany and was in truth itself only ambiguously Marxist. In other countries in the 1870s and 1880s, Marxism competed with a range of socialist tendencies. Thus, while Marx's fame certainly grew, it was less impressive in its growth than Darwin's had been after 1859. The spread of Marx's ideas was also encumbered by the problem of "what Marx really meant" – the "correct" understanding of his theory, about which there seemed to be less and less consensus. That issue was taken up repeatedly in various socialist gatherings, and eventually by thousands of publications, both by Marxists and their enemies. Such was especially the case after revolutionaries calling themselves Marxists took over in Russia in late 1917. The debates about what Marx really meant continue to this day.

Marx was only too aware of the problem that others had in understanding him. In 1875 he penned a searing though non-public "Critique of the Gotha Program" (the founding program of the SPD), and in 1883, shortly before his death, he wrote despairingly to Engels, "one thing is certain: *I am not a Marxist!*" What was bothering Marx when he penned those lines was akin to what had disturbed Darwin as he observed the widespread vulgarization and promiscuous uses of his scientific theories. But in Marx's case the issues were more tangled, to a significant degree, it must be said, the result of his often opaque writing style. But there were also shifts over the years in his own theoretical emphases, to say nothing of some monumentally murky points in his theories, at all stages of their development. However, more historically important than what "Marx really meant" is "how Marx was understood," or how he was misunderstood, reinterpreted, and explicitly revised. Whatever the problems with the theory itself, the fact remains that Marxism attracted a wide, growing, and often admiring interest.

What most offended Marx in the SPD's Gotha Program was what he considered its compromising language. He wanted a more forthright revolutionary stance. Related and equally troubling to him were traces of the thought of Ferdinand Lassalle, the charismatic German socialist who had died in a duel in 1864 at age thirty-nine. Marx envied Lassalle's popularity with the German working masses and was outraged at Lassalle's failure to mention how much his ideas were borrowed from Marx's writings. Moreover, Lassalle's attitude to the Prussian state seemed to veer into what Marx considered dangerous directions. Marxist theory stipulated that the state form under capitalism, since it was a tool of the bourgeoisie, had to be "smashed" by a proletarian dictatorship. Lassalle, more in line with Hegel's thinking, was inclined to think of the Prussian state as standing above society, at least potentially transcending class allegiances, and thus able to perform an ethical mission to resolve the conflicts within society. Marx and Engels were both aware, in addition, that some of the leaders in the new party were openly dismissive of Marx's insistence that capitalism could not be reformed gradually. These leaders entered into the parliamentary life of the new German state in a positive, hopeful spirit, at least until 1878 and the passage of the Anti-Socialist Laws.

Persecution by the state tended to drive the German social democrats in Marx's direction and away from hopes for peaceful reform. What most people came to understand by "Marxist" was an insistence that class conflict could only be resolved by violent revolution, not "bourgeois" parliamentary action. However, many anarchists

were also revolutionary and intensely anti-bourgeois. As noted in Chapter 8, one of Marx's major opponents in the First International in the 1860s was the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin, known as "the father of modern anarchism." Bakunin was much indebted to Proudhon, but his version of anarchism differed from the Frenchman's "mutualism" in being more collectivist and more accepting of Europe's industrialization. Marx differed from Bakunin in rejecting terrorist violence as counterproductive. Moreover, Marx integrated revolutionary intransigence into a "scientific" demonstration of the inevitable self-transformation of capitalism into socialism, with revolutionary violence being justified only when capitalism had reached its final stages. Thus, Marxism came across as more solid, its followers less inclined to irrational outbursts of violence and more respectful of "objective conditions."

The *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 had been devoted in large part to a critique of early nineteenth-century socialists as naive and "utopian"; Marx and Engels claimed to be realists, stepping beyond airy illusions about human benevolence and concentrating on real economic forces. They similarly believed that the free-market economy was not, as maintained by Smiles and by Spencer, some sort of perfect, timeless ideal but rather a mere passing stage of human history. Marx believed he had amply exposed these self-satisfied bourgeois gentlemen. While he too was a theorist of "change," he took the notion in more philosophically sophisticated directions. Marx had taken the thought of the most profound philosopher of change, Hegel, and "turned it on its head," by demonstrating that it was not ideas, not *Geist*, but material forces that were the ultimate reality behind historical change.

It has often been observed that Marxism represented a synthesis of three intellectual traditions: German philosophy, French socialism, and British political economy. The comment, while plausible, is also simplistic, in that those traditions overlapped and had already influenced one another in many ways. Still, the notion of a synthesis of three traditions appropriately underlines how Marx built upon a range of existing theories, no less than Darwin did. It is worth noting, again with parallels to the reception of Darwin's theory, how people tend to understand (and misunderstand) new ideas in ways that reveal their own intellectual background or psychological agendas. French and British Marxists stumbled over unfamiliar German philosophical concepts; they tended to interpret Marx in ways that made sense to French and English admirers, while causing Marx and other Germans to observe haughtily that they just didn't get it.

The differences between the Marxist and anarchist camps had to do, on the most obvious level, with party organization. The Marxists insisted on the importance of building up disciplined parties of the proletariat in each country, patiently accumulating power but also letting capitalism do its work. The anarchists tended to distrust political parties, especially insofar as parties were primarily concerned with parliamentary action and careerism. Moreover, anarchists believed that the moment of revolution was unpredictable, not strongly tied to material conditions; revolution was an expression of human will, not of impersonal forces. Although some anarchists were gentle, poetic souls, many others were fascinated by violence, what they referred to as the "propaganda of the deed" (assassinations and other acts of terror against the ruling classes), which they believed could rouse the masses from their apathy and pessimism.

The Development of Social Darwinism and Evolutionary Thinking

Again to Marx's alarm, his theories were understood by some of his own followers in social-Darwinistic ways, and in truth some forms of social Darwinism did have socialistic potential. Even in the writings of Herbert Spencer (discussed in Chapter 8) is to be found the suggestion that in order to establish a level playing field a progressive inheritance tax should be initiated and free legal aid offered to the poor. A similar concern to give the lower classes a fair chance to compete was also to be found in the writings of the liberal, John Stuart Mill, especially in his later years. In regard to these various musings about how to establish fair competition, a question naturally arose: How could an inheritance or income tax be introduced without putting a dangerously great power in the hands of the state? Few clear or persuasive answers to that question emerged, but it would be a long-lasting one.

Some social Darwinists, such as Walter Bagehot, emphasized the role of human groups rather than individuals in the struggle for survival, not only in early human history, when humans had formed into tribes, but also in modern times, when they formed nations. The effectiveness of a people's organization was thus crucial to its success and survival. Bagehot published one of his most celebrated and influential works, *Physics and Politics*, in 1872, just after the victory of German forces over France. There was much talk at the time of German superiority in organization and efficiency.

Some on the socialist left did use Bagehot's kind of reasoning, emphasizing the group over the individual, to refute the individualistic emphasis of men like Spencer and Smiles. One of the best known in the late nineteenth century was the Russian theoretician of anarchism (or anarcho-communism) Prince Peter Kropotkin. A man who certainly qualifies as a gentle soul, he was also, in terms of the standards of the day, a reasonably sophisticated observer of the natural world. He fully accepted the reality of evolution in that world but argued that cooperation within a species was more important to its survival than struggle between individuals of that species. He concluded that human cooperation would assure human progress of *homo sapiens* much more effectively than the struggle between individuals or warfare between races and nations.

Kropotkin was admired as a near saint; his father had owned 1200 "souls" (serfs), but the son chose a life of material simplicity and introspection. His anarchist theories resulted in his being hounded by the tsarist police and condemned to Siberian exile, where he whiled away the hours with observation of Siberian wildlife. In arguing for anarchistic communism, he wrote "What right had I... to live in a world of higher emotions [taking food from] the mouths of those who grew the wheat?" Such concern for the impoverished Russian masses was characteristic of a thin strata of intellectuals, mostly from the nobility. In other regards, Kropotkin was returning to one of the basic perceptions of the first socialists, that humans are not like nature's lonely hunters but rather resemble social animals. He added that it was not only the basic animal instincts of human beings but also their unique ability to pass knowledge on from generation to generation that made them eminently social; the "self-made" businessman was a ludicrous pretense, since capitalists depended so crucially upon an intricate nexus of social institutions and privileged connections. Kropotkin's use of the term "communist" for his version of anarchism suggested how he envisaged the most satisfactory human condition, inspired by the slogan "To each according to his needs,

from each according to his ability.” His emphasis was also on spirituality and material simplicity rather than the kind of productive material abundance that capitalism promised or Marx believed would prevail after capitalism had done its work.

By the late nineteenth century, the term “communist” had fallen out of use and no longer suggested a connection with Marxists, who had dropped it in favor “social democrat.” It was only after the Bolshevik Revolution, at the end of World War I, that the term Marx had used in his *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 was once again picked up by the revolutionary wing of the Russian Marxists. However, there was an interesting parallel in Marx’s and Kropotkin’s conceptions of the ultimate communist society; both thought of human happiness in terms of a psychic liberation (being free of destructive egoism), artistic creation, and the development of the “higher emotions.” Adequate material plenty – the end of mass poverty – had of course to be assured, but it was not the crucial element of their brave new worlds.

The Russian intellectual, or *intelligent*, of which Kropotkin was a prime example, can be considered a peculiarly Russian phenomenon, in some regards similar to western intellectuals and much influenced by western thought but in other ways distinct. *Intelligentsia* is in origin a Russian word, one that was eventually adopted in the west to suggest an intellectual elite standing far above the common run of humanity. The remarkable flowering of Russian culture in the nineteenth century added to the cachet of the term, reflecting a largely unprecedented development: Russian intellectuals and artists became widely admired, and came to exercise a lasting impact on western intellectual life. Kropotkin’s fame was modest compared to that of such men as Ivan Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Anton Chekhov in literature, or Alexander Borodin, Peter Tchaikovsky, and Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov in music. While deeply rooted in Russian life and culture, all of these men powerfully touched the hearts and minds of non-Russians, in western Europe and eventually across the planet. Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, first published in Russia in the late 1860s in serial form, with translations into the major European tongues coming in the next few decades, became one of the most widely read and celebrated novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In these cultural and intellectual regards, Russia’s claim to be part of Europe became more secure as the century progressed, the Russians enjoying what the French term a *succès d’estime*, in contrast to the *succès de scandale* that had been more common in the earlier part of the century, especially while the reactionary Nicholas I ruled.

Russian Revolutionary Movements in the 1870s and 1880s

The previously mentioned glorification of the Russian *narod* (people) by Dostoevsky and the Slavophiles, as more generous and less destructively individualistic than western peoples, had obvious commonalities with the beliefs of a broad movement in Russian that came to be known as *narodnik* (populist). The origins of the movement extended into the pre-1848 period, but it came into greatest prominence in the aftermath of the humiliations of the Crimean war and in the disappointments associated with Alexander II’s reforms. The *narodniki* (anglicized as “narodniks”) were an unmistakably indigenous movement, one that might simply be termed a Russian anarcho-socialist ideology.

Yet some significant differences existed between the narodniks and their western counterparts.

Western socialist ideology had emerged in reaction to liberal individualism and capitalism, in the context of the political and economic revolutions in France and Britain. Liberal individualism had shallow roots in Russia; the country experienced no 1789 and no 1848, nor had modern industrialism much penetrated the Russian empire by mid-century. Members of the intelligentsia in Russia were very much aware of western developments and inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment, but what concerned them most pressingly were indigenous Russian problems, in particular the institutions that they associated with Russian backwardness and vulnerability – serfdom, tsarist autocracy, the absence of popular representation, rural poverty, and illiteracy.

Narodnik is a broadly generic term; the narodniks eventually branched into many mutually hostile factions, but Dostoevsky's somewhat older contemporary, Alexander Herzen, is recognized as the writer who most influentially propagated the concerns of the movement. Herzen's Germanic-looking name may also be seen as suggestive. He was the illegitimate child of a German woman and a wealthy Russian landowner, and he spent most of his life in foreign exile. Yet he became famous for his celebration of the Russian common people. As a young man, in the 1840s, he was dazzled by all things western, but the failures of the revolutions of 1848 horrified him, and he observed with growing disgust what he considered the smugness and hypocrisy of the western bourgeoisie of the 1850s and 1860s. He initially welcomed Alexander II's reforms but soon became disillusioned with them.

Herzen's most cherished hope, and that of all subsequent narodniks, was that Russia could avoid the pains and pitfalls associated with western Europe's capitalist path to modernization, following instead a more cooperative and humane path. That hope rested on the existence of native Russian institutions, in particular the previously mentioned collective agricultural institution, the *mir*, as well as the *artel*, a worker-owned and -operated workshop that often moved from village to village. Herzen perceived great virtues in the common people; his exhortation "go to the people!" – learn from them, build a shining new world on the basis of their generous spirit – became central to the narodnik movement.

The *mir* was the institution upon which Alexander II had based his emancipation of Russia's serfs, but the terms of that emancipation (generous to the landowners and onerous to the former serfs) deeply disappointed the narodniks. They also concluded that the tsar and the classes that depended upon his autocratic rule would never consent to the extensive reforms necessary. There emerged then within the ranks of the narodniks the previously mentioned anarchist notion of the "propaganda of the deed." It might be termed natural in a country where other forms of propaganda were not allowed. But the narodniks differed sharply among themselves about how much the people could be expected to rise up after a dramatic act of terror. Could one rely upon the naturally rebellious instincts of the rural population of Russia, known for violent uprisings in the past? Was a prolonged agitation among them a necessary preliminary stage, and to what extent would an educated leadership be necessary?

A watershed development was the famous "going to the people" (*khozhdienie k narody*) of the summer of 1874. Taking up Herzen's slogan, youthful activists, in large part students, scattered to the countryside to mingle with the peasants. However, they

encountered incomprehension and distrust, often to the point that peasant leaders called in the authorities. Thereafter, those who emphasized elitist-revolutionary direction, the need to do for the people what they did not have the sense or “consciousness” to do for themselves, became more important.

That tendency towards elitism within the Russian revolutionary movement finally earned a fearsome reputation. It had western precedents and parallels, in the communist tradition of Babeuf and Blanqui, but in Russia a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of the elitist revolutionary mystique developed, in transforming “revolution” and “the people” into concepts resembling those of religious fanatics. Sergei Nechaev, one of the most notorious of the narodnik revolutionaries, collaborated with Bakunin in the composition of the *Catechism of a Revolutionary* (1869), in which it was stipulated that the revolutionary had to be devoted to the “merciless destruction” of all existing states and societies. The revolutionary could have no private life; “his entire being is to be devoured by one purpose, one thought, one passion – the revolution.” Moreover, the revolutionary “must ally himself with the savage world of the violent criminal, the only true revolutionary.”

Such men found novelistic representation in the works of Dostoevsky, notably *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Possessed* (1872), and in Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons* (1862). Well into the twentieth century there were those who praised and drew from the *Catechism*, in organizations as diverse as the American Black Panthers and the suicide bombers of the Middle East. Nechaev became especially notorious for his assertion that any measure that forwarded the revolution, no matter how much it outraged traditional morality, was just; anything that slowed the revolution was unjust. In short, a particularly brutal interpretation of the notion that the end justifies the means. Nechaev’s willingness to murder not only conservative tsarist officials but reformist liberals – even other revolutionaries who, in his eyes, were a danger to the correct revolutionary path – provoked widespread revulsion.

An organization calling itself the People’s Will (*Narodnaya Volya*) succeeded in killing Tsar Alexander II, but his son, Alexander III, put an end to any illusions that the state would crumble or that the people would rise up in revolution. He oversaw a period of fierce repression by tsarist authorities. The question so pressingly asked by the narodniks, *chto delat’?* (What to do, or what is to be done?), had not found a satisfactory answer in “going to the people.” In the ensuing years, some Russian revolutionaries turned, with growing interest, toward the theories of Karl Marx – had he provided the answer to what is to be done in Russia?

The Appearance of Modern Racial-Political Antisemitism

Previous chapters have traced the evolution of the concept of race and the peculiar situation of Jews in European society in the nineteenth century. What requires special attention in the 1870s and 1880s is the way that Jews came to be described with a new “scientific” vocabulary, less as a religious community and more as members of the Semitic race. Similarly, these years saw the formation of political organizations in western and central Europe devoted to opposing what was considered a menacing rise of that race. A newly coined ism of these years, antisemitism, entailed a program of action

to counter that rise, going beyond the social exclusion of Jews or the familiar laments about their repellent cultural habits. The antisemitic parties thus sought, by parliamentary action, to reverse the civil equality that had been widely granted to Europe's Jews by the 1870s. More extreme or violent solutions to the Jewish Question lurked in the background, but non-violent legal action was what most of the leaders of those parties demanded at this point.

This new ism had a number of traits in common with the isms that emerged earlier in the century. Just as socialists viewed capitalism as destructive, so antisemites saw rising Jews as destructive – and indeed typically responsible for the worst excesses of capitalism and liberalism. Most of these isms involved a notion of the Enemy, along with positive programs for the future. With antisemitism, the vision of the Enemy was the main concern; the positive programs, while not absent, were less prominent, mostly implicit in the vision of how much better society would function once its destructive Jewish element had been disenfranchised and in other ways brought firmly under the control of the state.

In the western regions of the Russian Empire, where the great majority of Europe's Jews lived, violent expressions of hostility to Jews also rose sharply in the 1880s, but the situation was different in a number of regards. Rather than political agitation within the bounds of legality, violent action against the Jews broke out in the pogroms following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, reaching a level of violence that exceeded any anti-Jewish action in Russia or Europe since the Chmielnicki massacres of the seventeenth century. As noted, restrictions on Jewish movement had been significantly loosened during Alexander II's reign, but Jews had not gained civil equality in Russia. Political parties remained illegal, and there was no equivalent to western parliaments. Obviously, then, in Russia there were no antisemitic parties comparable to those in western Europe seeking to reverse Jewish civil equality.

Another difference between Russia and the countries to its west was that "racial science," or the new vocabulary of race, had not much penetrated the Russian Empire; the mobs that ravaged Jewish shops and dwellings would not have recognized the term "Semite." The Russian term *zhid* covered much of what was understood by "Semite" in the west, but in Russia the differences between Jews and the surrounding population were still formulated primarily in traditional religious terms, and conversion to Christianity allowed Jews to escape the legislation directed at the Jewish religious community. Other modern isms, too, such as liberalism and socialism, had not become part of the active vocabulary of the Russian common people. Still, a process in that direction had begun; especially after 1890, western concepts flowed into Russia to an unprecedented degree, as did capital investment and modern technology.

The nature of the Jewish rise in Russia was also different. It was first of all demographic; the Jewish population growth was half again more rapid than that of non-Jews within the empire, with an exaggerated impact in urban areas, to which Jews were moving in disproportionate numbers. Even as millions of Jews began to emigrate out of Russia from the late 1870s on, the proportion of Jews in the overall population of European Russia continued to rise steadily. The Jewish rise in Russia was also to some degree economic. In the liberal era of the 1860s and 1870s, Russian Jewish equivalents to the Rothschilds of the west emerged, men who made fabulous fortunes within a short period. However, although thousands of Jews did join the comfortable middle class and

became a significant proportion of it, most Russian Jews remained poor, if not quite so abjectly as most of the peasantry.

A yet further difference in the Jewish rise in Russia was that a growing proportion of the Jewish population, especially its youth, had begun to join revolutionary movements. Among those arrested for the assassination of the tsar and for other acts of political terror in preceding years were remarkably large numbers of Jews. Such activism by Jews would have been almost unthinkable a half-century earlier, when Jews were known for their political passivity and respect for tsarist authority. The Decembrists, the rebels of December 1825, for example, had included no Jews.

What set off the pogroms after Alexander's assassination has been much debated among historians. For many years, it was nearly an article of faith, especially among the Jews who had left the country, that the new tsar had "ordered" the Russian masses to "beat the Jews" in punishment for their alleged role in the murder of his father. But scholars now stress that Alexander III was both surprised and alarmed by the pogroms. At first he thought that they were part of a planned further stage of revolutionary assault. At any rate, it would have been unlikely at this point that any tsar would have called upon the anarchically destructive "dark masses" to rise up in violence. Alexander III's suspicion that revolutionaries were urging the peasants to attack the Jews was inaccurate, but some revolutionaries did applaud the "awakening" of the peasant masses and saw their attacks on the "Jewish exploiters," agents of the propertied nobility, as justified.

A similar article of faith has been that Russia's Jews, after the assassination, began to leave Russia by the millions to escape further violence and tsarist persecution. That belief is closer to modern scholarly understanding, since the notorious May Laws of 1882 sought to rein in those Jews who had allegedly gotten so "out of control" in the liberal 1860s and 1870s. (In a sense, then, tsarist decree accomplished what antisemitic parties in western Europe were demanding for their countries.) Russia's Jews felt that they were being unjustly disciplined, but nonetheless other factors weighed heavily in their decision to emigrate, chief among them the Jewish population explosion and the failure of the Russian economy to absorb it. Urban crowding and unemployment became unbearable in many areas. Revealingly, those were generally the areas of greatest rioting. Other, probably even more decisive, factors were the new means of transportation and new demands for labor in the New World. News of opportunities in America began to spread, meshing into a profound shift in Jewish mentality in Russia. There was a rising sense among Jews, replacing the passivity of the past, that a better life was possible. It was a sense that led many young Jews to join revolutionary movements, rather than emigrate.

Forty to fifty years before, when the treatment of Jews under Nicholas I had been even harsher, no significant exodus had occurred, underlining the importance of new opportunities and different mentalities. Another point suggesting that the pogroms were not decisive in the decision to emigrate is that the rate of Jewish emigration had already begun to rise in the late 1870s, before the pogroms and the May Laws. Similarly, in Austrian Galicia, where there were no pogroms and no hostile legislation, but much poverty and overcrowding, Jews moved out in numbers quite comparable to those moving out of Russia. And of course millions of others from poor regions of Europe began to migrate to the New World in this period. In short, Jewish exodus was part of a larger trend.

Antisemitism in Germany

Destitute and culturally different Jews moving out of eastern Europe by the millions tended to worsen Jewish–Gentile relations in central and western Europe. Limiting immigration was another demand of the antisemitic parties, alongside ending civil equality. However, until World War I, the level of anti-Jewish violence outside Russia remained low, and issues peculiar to each country played decisive roles. In Germany, the stock-market crash of 1873 had undoubtedly involved a number of Jewish swindlers. The prominent participation of Jews in the leading ranks of the SPD and in other left-wing parties (in these cases mostly prosperous, highly educated Jews) unsettled some Germans, Bismarck included. Other observers raised broader if related issues of Jews being “overly critical” or “culturally destructive” of a young German nation just establishing its identity. In an even broader way, it was felt that Jews were “too successful”; it was not accepted as proper that non-Christians should assume such increasingly prominent roles in societies that were over 99 percent Christian.

Critics of the Jews in Germany ranged in nature from the barely respectable and middle-brow to the highly prestigious and intellectually sophisticated. The author of one of the first antisemitic best-sellers, *The Victory of Jewry over Germany* (1879), Wilhelm Marr, amply drew from the new racial perspective and terminology. He insisted that his concerns about the rise of the Jews in Germany had nothing to do with religious bigotry and everything to do with the destructive potential of Jews holding elevated positions in non-Jewish societies. Marr energetically rejected the “medieval” charges against Jews, such as the Blood Libel and the Desecration of the Host.

A popular and prestigious historian at the University of Berlin, Heinrich von Treitschke, leveled his own wounded, angry charges about Jewish cultural destructiveness. Treitschke’s name became associated with the infamous slogan “the Jews are our misfortune!” He was not a doctrinaire racist, and his approach was entirely hortatory (that is, imploring the Jews to improve); he freely recognized that some Jews had become productive, praiseworthy German citizens, and he opposed proposals to strip Jews of civil equality. However, his critical outburst helped to legitimize Jew-hatred of a more extreme sort in the educated and respectable population, itself caught up in the nationalist fervor of the 1880s. Tolerance for minorities and ardent nationalism have rarely sat well together, and in most other countries, too, extreme nationalism, antisemitism, and other forms of racism tended to blend.

Another figure from the ranks of the respectable classes, Adolf Stoecker, the chaplain to the court of the Kaiser, began his own anti-Jewish campaign with the hope of weaning the working class away from the social democrats. He had little success among workers but encountered more positive reactions among the lower-middle class (as did Marr). His message was not doctrinally racist either: He attacked Jews primarily from a Christian perspective, describing Judaism as a worn-out faith; conversion to Christianity was his implicit answer to the Jewish Question (though he was suspicious of the many opportunist conversions by Jews, such as that of Heinrich Heine). One of his characteristic slogans was “the Social Question is the Jewish Question,” conveying a message that the Jews were especially responsible for the destructive side of capitalism.

Marr, Treitschke, and Stoecker were only a few of the anti-Jewish voices of the 1870s and 1880s in Germany, but there is a danger of exaggerating the success of German antisemitism at this stage. Nothing like a consensus emerged about the measures to be taken against Jews, and the German antisemitic parties turned out to be an abject failure, never getting more than 5 percent of the vote, discredited by scandal, and split into mutually abusive factions. Some historians have concluded, however, that in a broader sense the wave of anti-Jewish hostility in Germany, given the country's rising prestige and power in Europe, helped to give antisemitism an aura of modernism and intellectual respectability that earlier forms of Jew-hatred lacked.

The Weakness of Antisemitism in Italy and Britain

In Britain, "scientific" racism and nationalist arrogance were undoubtedly present in the 1870s and 1880s, but the country's Jewish population experienced nothing comparable to the wave of hostility to Jews in Russia and Germany. Italy, too, saw almost no modern racial-political antisemitism; Italian Jews remained prominent in Italian politics from the time of Cavour on, which is especially remarkable given their small numbers (approximately 0.1 percent of the total population). Two men of Jewish origin, Sidney Sonnino and Luigi Luzzatti, would serve as Italian prime ministers in the years immediately before World War I. Britain, of course, also had a prime minister of Jewish origin and a number of other prominent Jewish politicians. Disraeli undoubtedly faced suspicion or contempt from some elements of British society because of his Jewish origin, but he was also widely admired, covered with honors by the end of his life and a favorite of Queen Victoria.

Among Disraeli's many admirers were Randolph Churchill and his son Winston, both of whom were known to repeat, in speeches and conversations, Disraeli's dictum that "God favors the nations who favor the Jews." Even those who disliked Disraeli did not usually do so because they believed him racially inferior (and Disraeli himself made much of what he believed was the racial superiority of Jews). He, like both Churchills, freely expressed himself in racist ways, placing Europeans, including Jewish Europeans, on the top of a racial hierarchy, with the non-European races of the world below, and Africans at the very bottom.

Antisemitism in France: Renan and the Scandals of the 1880s

The first country to award Jews civil equality, France, was generally seen by Jews in other countries as a model of tolerance. In the course of the century, highly assimilated French Jews rose to prominence in many realms, cultural, economic, and political. Contrary to what one might expect, Jews in France had not been widely blamed for its many political crises and catastrophes since 1815. Jews were not prominently involved in France's revolutions, from 1789 to 1871, nor were they notable leaders among its many left-wing sects and theorists. But, at the same time, theorists of race counted many influential French exponents, including the above-discussed Gobineau, on the

conservative right, and Proudhon, on the anarchist left. In terms of the new racial vocabulary, special mention must be made of a French writer whose works became among the most widely read in the nineteenth century, Ernest Renan.

Renan's initial fame derived from a sensationably popular and controversial book, *La Vie de Jésus* (The Life of Jesus), first appearing in 1863 and almost immediately translated into English and other languages. His voluminous subsequent publications on the origins of Christianity also attracted a wide readership. At a time when the implications of Darwin's work for the Old Testament's account of creation were being passionately discussed, Renan offered a secular account of Christ's life, using modern historical techniques that questioned the historical reliability of the Gospels. Many Christians were even more outraged by Renan's image of Christ than they were by Darwin's theories, since it touched upon the basis of the Christian moral vision and therefore, they believed, presented an immediate danger to social stability.

Renan's use of the term "race" as a key category of historical analysis may be termed secular, but it was not "scientific" in the way that Darwin's theories were. It is tempting to compare Renan's use of race with Marx's use of class. Today both seem imprecise and inadequate, patently part of outdated nineteenth-century mentalities. Nonetheless, those two concepts, race and class, as they came to be understood in the final decades of the nineteenth century, might be termed the guiding conceptual bases of competing right-wing and left-wing worldviews for the next century.

Renan's use of "Semite" in his writings about the ancient Jews and other Middle Eastern peoples, such as the Arabs, involved a kind of racial determinism, although the Semitic race in Renan's sense of it, unlike that of the antisemites, had both creative and destructive aspects. He described the Semites as being stubbornly intolerant of other religions and murderously destructive of "idolatrous" peoples, but the Semites also had brought ethical monotheism to the world, which Renan considered a major step forward for humanity. However, in his view, the Jews eventually lost their creativity; they became frozen in spiritual development by their blind attachment to Talmudic interpretations. Jews thus rejected Christianity and its more universalistic vision (and that vision, in Renan's view, was another step forward for humanity and essential to modern European progress).

Disraeli's variety of racism had parallels in France, in that many French Jews, especially the more secular, were also attracted to modern racism. For some Jews, the new racist language became useful in describing a new secular identity: What today might be termed an ethnic or cultural identity was in these years commonly termed "racial." A French Jew might find it appropriate to describe himself as "Jewish by race but not religion." For some observers, the remarkable economic success and upward mobility of Jews seemed proof, in social-Darwinistic terms, of Jewish superiority.

The 1880s in France were a time of numerous scandals in which, as in Germany, Jews were highly visible. Jewish financiers had long been charged by various French authors with being powers behind the scenes. A new bank, the Union Générale, formed explicitly to provide Catholic investors with a means to avoid the abundant Jewish and Protestant banks, collapsed in 1882, wiping out the savings of many small Catholic investors. Charges arose that the Rothschilds were responsible for the collapse. More important was the so-called Panama Scandal, having to do with the financial collapse in 1889 of the French company that in 1881 had begun constructing a canal in Panama. In the ensuing investigation, Jewish intermediaries were shown to have been

amply involved in bribing parliamentary delegates to hide the malfeasance and incompetence of those in charge of the project.

French Catholics tended to believe that Jews, Protestants, and secular politicians were in cahoots. There was no doubt a widening cultural and religious divide, intensified by the so-called Ferry Laws, passed between 1879 and 1886, that provided for greater secular control over primary education, removing it from Catholic control. The explicit goal was to modernize the countryside, which for many leaders of the Third Republic meant preventing priests from filling the minds of France's children with religious dogma and antimodern ideas.

Again there were parallels in Germany, with Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s, a "cultural struggle" against the Catholic obscurantism typical of Pius IX's papacy. In both Germany and France, these anti-Catholic measures were enthusiastically supported by those in the Jewish population who saw the Church as hostile to them. In both countries Catholics felt under attack by a modern alliance of Jews, atheists, and Protestants.

Further Reading

Of the many biographies of Marx, David McLellan's *Karl Marx: A Biography* (1995) remains the best. Gary P. Steenson's *Karl Kautsky, 1854–1938: Marxism in the Classic Years* (1991) is a concise biography of the major Marxist theoretician after Marx's death, with a balanced treatment of the controversies within the Marxist movement.

On the anarchist opponents of the Marxists, see James Joll, *The Anarchists* (1980); George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (2004); and Martin A. Miller, *Kropotkin* (1979).

Most of the biographies of the major Bolsheviks (see Chapter 14 and Chapter 17) include background chapters on the evolution of the narodniks and the early Russian Marxists. An early and now classic account, having gone through many editions, is Bertram Wolfe's *Three who Made a Revolution: A Biographical History of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin* (2001, 1st ed. 1948). For a briefer, more general overview of the evolution of Marxism in Russia and the West, see Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (1984).

Similarly, the background chapters to books dealing with the Dreyfus Affair (Chapter 11), provide much information on the rise of antisemitism in the 1870s and 1880s, as do Albert S. Lindemann's *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs, Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank* (1991) and *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (1997).

10 Germany and Russia in the Belle Epoque 1890–1914

The quarter-century before World War I has been considered a “beautiful epoch” (*belle époque*) for a number of reasons, and not only by the French, whose term for it was eventually taken up in other countries. An Italian observer later wrote about these years that “we look back ... with a sad feeling of regret; we were happy then and did not know it.” However, for many of those living through it, this age was more likely to have been described as one of insecurity, rising international tension, imperial arrogance, riots, racism, and revolutionary uprisings – a haunting prelude to the horrors of 1914–45.

There were substantial reasons to be happy in the Belle Epoque. Europe’s economy began to recover from the doldrums of the 1880s (after another brief plunge in the early 1890s), and most countries experienced renewed rates of economic growth and substantial improvements in their standards of living. From 1900 to 1914, industrial production in Europe rose nearly 40 percent (over 57 percent in France). A so-called second industrial revolution, spurred by the chemical and electrical industries, helped to provide such things as street lighting, better public transportation, and cleaner water, at least in the larger cities. The poorer elements of the population enjoyed cheaper clothing and more abundant food. In the countryside, too, where the depression had hit especially hard in the 1880s, farming income rose, in large part because of the rapid growth of urban areas and their demand for food. Even backward Russia experienced rapid urbanization and growth in heavy industry, fed by investments from the west, especially from Russia’s recently acquired diplomatic ally, the French Third Republic.

A Rising Germany

The improbable alliance between republican France and tsarist Russia was fraught with symbolism, related to Germany's rapid economic growth and the widespread alarm that Germany's rapid rise incurred. By the turn of the century the German Reich was producing more steel than Great Britain and France combined, and its population outstripped that of *la grande nation* by 18 million (c. 56 million as compared to 38 million). Germany's ascent was notable in many areas: science, technology, higher education, Nobel prizes, music, literature, architecture, the visual arts – the list was long and extremely impressive. German businessmen began to offer goods and services widely regarded as superior in quality to those offered by the British, who resented the ungentlemanly manners of these German upstarts almost as bad as the Yankees, and much closer to home.

For the first time since the 1840s, British elites, rather than boasting of their country's advances, began to worry seriously about its ability to compete. Their concerns about Germany moved them to make overtures to their age-old antagonists, the French, and to their other “natural” enemy, the Russians, with whom they had been butting heads in their far-flung empire. That these former antagonists were becoming more friendly was not unrelated to the fact that in 1890 Bismarck, who had so successfully isolated France while courting Russia, was forced, at age 75, into retirement, to be replaced as the most prominent symbol of Germany by the younger (age 40), unstable, saber-rattling Wilhelm II. In Russia, too, there was what many took to be a significant change in 1894, when Nicholas II became the new tsar at age 26. Many hoped that Nicholas would be a new “tsar liberator,” like his grandfather, Alexander II. He turned out to be at least as disastrous a leader as Wilhelm.

These tectonic diplomatic shifts might be viewed as perfectly reasonable adjustments, under the system of balance of power, in response to Germany's growth. However, because of the speed of Germany's ascent, the truculence of Wilhelm II, and the reckless dynamism of the period, the shifts had less of the appearance of a reasonable adjustment and more one of a vicious cycle, each side intimidating and inciting the other in dangerous directions. The French, Russians, and British gradually felt the necessity of surrounding and containing this new power, whose earlier “honest broker,” Bismarck, had been replaced by an unbearably bumptious Kaiser. Germans, believing they had every right to a place in the sun, came to consider themselves unfairly held back and threatened with a strangulating “encirclement” (*Einkreisung*).

Such convictions moved the Germans to firm up their alliance with the only remaining major power, Austria-Hungary. A shift toward a stark bipolarity in diplomatic relations was underway, intensified by an arms race. Historians have seen the early 1890s as marking the beginnings of an eventually fatal diplomatic syndrome.

Liberalism Challenged, Mass Politics, and the Second Industrial Revolution

These diplomatic shifts occurred in the context of a further distancing from classical liberalism, toward what has been termed “the age of the masses” and “politics in a new key.” A more reckless nationalism and violent internal conflicts emerged in all countries, visible

on many levels: in the screaming headlines of the period's yellow journalism, in the mobs rioting against the Jews, in workers' strikes, and in anarchists' acts of terror. Both liberals and conservatives moved toward a fuller acceptance of these shifts and toward what at least seemed an exercise of a more direct sovereignty by the common people. The process had begun, in various forms (Napoleonic, Bismarckian, Disraelian), by the 1850s and 1860s, but the mass politics of the Belle Epoque pushed hard in ill-omened directions, away from the conservative ideal of *noblesse oblige* and the liberal ideal of the rational and informed citizen. Replacing these older ideals were newer practices, involving manipulation of a mass electorate through emotional appeals to class resentments, nationalist exultation, and racist xenophobia. Both liberals and conservatives, similarly, moved toward embracing economic nationalism or "neo-mercantilism," involving new tariff barriers and expanding roles for the state, with much-enlarged state bureaucracies.

The second industrial revolution was characterized by less individual effort than had been the case in earlier industrialization. Distinctly larger amounts of investment capital were now necessary for startups and general operations. Similarly, industrial enterprises typically involved ampler concentrations, both on the side of capital (in large corporations and trusts) and on the side of labor (in trade unions and socialist parties). In Germany the SPD emerged in 1890 from its twelve years of illegal status to become not only Germany's largest party but also a new political model, proudly different from the older-style parties that were led and financed by upper-class, established elites. The SPD attracted a more disciplined, dues-paying mass membership, and its leaders were chosen from the working class, with a sprinkling of maverick intellectuals from the middle and upper classes.

The expanding SPD and its associated trade unions alarmed Germany's economic barons and allied ruling orders. Germany's leaders thus felt mounting threats from inside the country as well as from its neighboring states. Paranoia is a dangerous if somewhat paradoxical mentality in a state and people rapidly growing in power. It is all the more dangerous when the states around it are also in the grip of a similar mentality, France perhaps most of all, given the terrible defeat it had experienced in 1870–1, but many of Germany's neighbors had substantial reasons for concern about its long-range intentions.

One might conclude, then, that the Belle Epoque was beautiful but also ugly, secure but insecure, creative but destructive. Within the contentious intellectual elites of these years, long-existing beliefs in steady progress clashed with emerging anxieties about decadence and downfall. Trust in the power of reason was further undermined by a "neo-Romantic" appreciation of the power of the irrational. The many other terms applied to the period – *fin de siècle* (end of century), Edwardian, Wilhelmian – carried suggestive nuances related to the pervasive preoccupation with decadence.

"End of century" had intimations of fatigue, the last stage of a glorious era. The term "Edwardian" derived from Edward VII, who took over the British throne in 1901. He had been heir apparent longer than anyone in British history, and was sixty years old when he became king. Stout and pleasure-loving, he harbored a most un-Victorian affection for the sensual delights of the Continent. "Wilhelmian" is derived from the new Kaiser, cursed from birth with a withered arm, and the term, like Edwardian, carried suggestions of release from long, burdensome parental restraints (from "father" Bismarck as from mother Victoria). Edward and Wilhelm were also

closely related: Wilhelm's mother was Victoria's eldest daughter, and both the English and German monarchs were related to Nicholas II, whose wife, Alexandra, was one of Victoria's many grandchildren. As noted in Chapter 2, Wilhelm, Nicholas, and Edward resembled one another physically. In retrospect, it is hard to see any of them as hopeful signs of Europe's future.

The Influence of Friedrich Nietzsche

The thinker who has come for many observers to epitomize the emerging trends of the era, Friedrich Nietzsche, actually did his most influential writing in the 1880s and spent his final years in an insane asylum. Although he too might be considered a theorist of change, he spoke to a different readership than the Hegelians, Darwinians, or Marxists. He ultimately had an enormous if also a seemingly contradictory influence on Europe's intellectual life, extending well into the mid-twentieth century. His thought was morbidly iconoclastic in regard to the traditional right, mocking bourgeois values and the Judeo-Christian tradition, but he also took aim at what he believed were the shallow pseudo-certainties of modern science. His writing style was peculiar, aphoristic, and often more like poetry than formal philosophy. In spite of his short life, he produced an impressive number of works, perhaps the most famous of which was *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1884–6).

As with Darwin and Marx, what Nietzsche actually wrote (or “really meant”) may be less important than how he was understood – or misunderstood, and used by those who misunderstood him in ways he did not intend. His intentions, at any rate, were obscure, especially given his predilection for paradox. (He wrote, “everything profound loves a mask.”) His sense of the Highest Good was uncertain but decidedly unlike prevailing attitudes of the day. He mocked the liberal belief that human beings were rationally calculating “thinking machines.” He was no believer in human equality, either, coining the term *Übermensch* (superman or superhuman) to refer to those who should take over from the ignorant masses and conformist bourgeoisie. He was notorious for such phrases as “God is dead” and “beyond good and evil.” He dismissed Christian virtues as reflecting a “slave morality” of the inferior trying to hold down the superior. He admired Dostoevsky for his plumbing of the depths of the human psyche, but he by no means shared the Russian novelist's mystical Christian faith.

Nietzsche has been seen as an important influence on the Nazis, but his writings were worlds away in sophistication from the crude certainties of the simplifications of Hitler or Himmler. Still, it is easy to see how Nietzschean thought could be used for racist, inhumane purposes. He might be considered the most provocative – and the least “politically correct” – of all nineteenth-century writers. There was a remorseless aesthetic elitism to his pronouncements, an unapologetic hard-heartedness, involving a summons to return to the aristocratic ethic of the ancient Greeks and to reject the Christian elevation of the meek, poor, and simple. However, Nietzsche did not describe his *Übermensch* as being a member of given race, and, similarly, he was not in any exacting sense a racist or antisemite. In fact, he held the political antisemites of his day in contempt, if also making comments about Jews that appealed to their enemies.

New Aspects of the German Question

The German Question, in one sense solved in 1870–1, in another sense emerged in a new and troubling form. At a fundamental level it was simply that there were “too damned many Germans” in Europe, to paraphrase a notorious quip of the French patriot Georges Clemenceau. Still, numbers were not the only or even the most important issue. The geographic centrality of German-speakers and their proliferation over the centuries into parts of central Europe and eastern Europe, leaving numerous pockets of German minorities, was another particularly knotty aspect of the German Question. Finally, most important was what might simply be termed “quality.” Literacy rates for German-speakers were higher than for the other major ethnic groups. The productivity of German labor was nearly in a class by itself, and in the course of the mid-nineteenth century Germans seemed on their way to mastering modern techniques of production more successfully than any European people, with the possible exception of the British (or the Americans, who were in the late nineteenth century to a large extent British and German in origin).

It became a heady mix: the glorification of *Macht* (power) in Bismarck’s Reich, the tendencies to state-worship, and the allures of the “scientific” theories elevating Germans to a racially superior people. By the 1890s a significant part of the German population was becoming intoxicated with ultra-nationalism, mixed with a peculiar resentment about how Germans had earlier been patronized or looked down up. To be sure, these German tendencies stand out especially in retrospect; it is easy to overlook the extent to which heated nationalist sentiments and self-pitying resentments existed in other countries. Similarly, it is often overlooked that the SPD, Germany’s largest party, opposed racism and stood staunchly for peace and international reconciliation. Furthermore, Germany’s second-largest party, the Catholic Center, was, in principle at least, “catholic,” meaning non-racist and universalist.

The SPD was, not surprisingly, reviled by German nationalists; Wilhelm II notoriously referred to social-democratic leaders as *vaterlandlosen Gesellen* (people with no fatherland). German Catholics’ loyalty had been subjected to suspicious scrutiny during Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf*, but together the Social Democrats and the Catholics, though political opponents, represented a solid majority in Bismarck’s Reich.

It is often forgotten that Bismarck, for all the fearsome anger he directed at those who opposed him internally, had offered a conciliatory German face in international relations after 1871. Announcing that Germany was a “satiated” power, he vowed to work, as an “honest broker,” for international peace. And he showed remarkable abilities – a kind of diplomatic legerdemain – in allying Germany with both Austria-Hungary and Russia, considered each other’s natural enemy because of their fundamentally clashing interests in the Balkans.

The German Question had in one sense been solved by Bismarck, but his *kleindeutsch* solution left millions of dissatisfied German-speakers in other countries, especially in Austria-Hungary, where many joined Pan-German movements. Bismarck’s solution also left other issues in abeyance, unsolved or made worse by the authoritarian nature of the state he created and by the way he personally ruled it. One can say, then, that alternative visions of Germany’s future and its true identity existed: Would the country evolve toward the more tolerant, liberal-democratic models of Britain and France (as



Figure 10.1 “Dropping the Pilot” by Sir John Tenniel. The “pilot,” Bismarck, is being dismissed, while the bumptious and incompetent young Kaiser Wilhelm II is taking over.
Source: Punch, 1890. © INTERFOTO / Alamy.

the SPD and most of the German left desired), or did Germany have a unique identity, destined to follow a “special path” (*Sonderweg*) – superior to, more disciplined than, and more deeply “philosophical” than the paths of the French and British?

With Bismarck removed and Wilhelm giving the signals after 1890, these issues took a more urgent aspect. Compared to Wilhelm, Bismarck seemed a man of calm reason and diplomatic genius (see Figure 10.1). Yet some have argued that Bismarck must be considered, on balance, a failure, leaving an unmanageable country, one with problems that no subsequent leader could possibly have resolved, even if one had emerged of greater talents and better instincts than Wilhelm.

Many nations in these years faced internal problems of equal or even greater gravity. France, Russia, and Austria-Hungary moved from crisis to crisis, deeply divided internally,

with highly uncertain futures – and with histories far bloodier than Germany's. The British were widely considered the most successful in running a modern nation-state, but their record was hardly without blemish; the Irish Question remained a bleeding sore, and at the end of the 1890s Britain would become entangled in a divisive imperial war against the Boer republics in southern Africa, with episodes easily as repellent in their blundering incompetence as those of any other European country.

The Evolution of German Social Democracy: The Revisionist Controversy

One of Bismarck's failures merits attention in terms of its lingering effects into the immediate prewar period. He had not only outlawed the SPD but also tried to wean the working class away from socialism by offering its members state-supported welfare measures. Aside from calculations of pure power, the "antiliberal" notion of the state as having a major responsibility to succor the poor and resolve social conflicts meshed with Prussian traditions and Hegelian thought. Bismarck's critics have argued that his initiatives tended to reinforce expectations by Germans that their state would care for them and ultimately could be relied upon "to do the right thing." The critics further argue that the political maturity of Germany's population was weakened by encouraging individual Germans to put too much trust in the state. However, the danger of that path seemed small when the German state was as well run as it was up to 1914. Many Social Democrats were also inclined to think that existing Prussian state institutions could be retained when the proletariat took over and introduced socialism.

Ironically, the rising SPD itself also began to show serious internal strains. These had implications beyond Germany, and they ultimately pushed the SPD to the edge of schism. The strains were related to issues discussed in Chapter 9 (that is, "what Marx really meant," how long the capitalist stage could be expected to last, and whether the demise of capitalism would necessarily involve a violent confrontation between the proletariat and the ruling class). Engels died in 1895, and a somewhat younger generation took up these long-simmering questions. Among the most important of the leaders after Engels was Karl Kautsky, recognized as the authoritative theoretician and the "orthodox" interpreter of Marxism; August Bebel, of an older generation but still widely admired as a savvy political leader; and Eduard Bernstein, who became the fallen angel, the eventually reviled "Revisionist" of the movement, after the publication in 1899 of a book, known in English translation as *Evolutionary Socialism*, that denied the need for a revolution.

These men had all been personal friends of Engels, and in the 1870s and 1880s they had endured persecution because of their Marxist convictions. To the end of his life, Bernstein insisted that he was still a Marxist, and that all he had tried to do was to bring Marx's theory up to date. However, his attachment to the Marxist label seemed to have had more to do with the emotional bonding of his youth and the comradeship he felt within the persecuted social-democratic movement than with the actual substance of the theory, since he did much more than update Marxism. He criticized it root and branch, in its theoretical framework and its factual basis. He denied that the internal contradictions of capitalism would inevitably lead to revolution and that class conflict

was unbridgeable. He described socialism as desirable, certainly, but by no means inevitable; it would come through incremental reform over a long period and patient work guiding by socialist ideals, not suddenly in a dramatic confrontation.

With scrupulously assembled facts and figures, Bernstein challenged point after point of what had become Marxist dogma. He demonstrated how capital and wealth were not becoming concentrated in all sectors of the economy. On the contrary, small and medium-sized fortunes were increasing both relatively and absolutely. The proletariat was not growing at the rate predicted by Marx and would likely never become an absolute majority, nor was the proletariat becoming ever more impoverished. In fact, its average salary was rising. Similarly, the white-collar, lower-middle-class, or petty-bourgeois "salaried" was growing faster than the proletariat, and the small peasantry in many areas of Germany and elsewhere were resisting proletarianization far more stubbornly and successfully than Marx had predicted.

Kautsky, in contrast, had devoted much energy in the early 1890s to firming up Marxism as the party's official creed. He was especially concerned with combating reformism in the party, which he dismissed as little different from "shallow" bourgeois democratic-radicalism. Not surprisingly, after 1899 his friendship with Bernstein soured, and, in alliance with the revolutionary-left faction of the SPD, he led a successful fight in 1903 to have Revisionism officially denounced by the SPD.

Much about the Revisionist Controversy resembled the controversies over Christian doctrine in previous centuries. There was decidedly something "religious" about the indignant way in which opposition to Bernstein's theories was expressed, which returns us to the issue of the revolutionary mystique: People joined revolutionary movements for many reasons, but prominent among them was the emotional high associated with such movements, similar to the exaltation experienced by religious believers – who considered themselves part of a divine cause, transcending personal interest, and having a profound moral significance. Marxism, as the most modern and sophisticated of the socialist theories, offered not only emotional but also intellectual satisfaction, and the assurance of being on the winning side of history. Bernstein's revision of Marxism, in removing essential elements of its claims to higher truth, threatened to undermine those emotional satisfactions. Many social-democratic activists felt similar to what sincere Christians felt when confronted with Darwinism or Renan's writings, since revision of the biblical account threatened the credibility of a larger whole, in particular the moral universe associated with Christian religion.

It was revealing, then, that Bebel, in his blistering attacks on Revisionism at the party congress, made arguments that emphasized moral rather than factual points. He charged that Revisionists were, in effect, renegades, composed mostly of bourgeois intellectuals and a newly prosperous "workers' aristocracy" that had lost contact with the sufferings and the aspirations of the toiling masses. Bernstein, with his emphasis on practical, mundane reforms, threatened to drain the social-democratic movement of that ineffable if crucial aspect that attracted idealists of all classes and gave common workers a sense of worth in a society that held them in low regard. Kautsky much feared a loss of forthright "proletarian character"; without it "we become a ball of the most contradictory interests, like the antisemites."

The concerns with Revisionism in Germany had parallels in other countries. In France, the socialist Alexander Millerand, in June of 1898, had joined the cabinet of a

coalition of left-wing republican but non-socialist parties. Marxists by this point had attracted only a small following in France, but they urged a formal condemnation of Millerand's "ministerialism" (that is, of cooperating with bourgeois parties in parliament). The matter was finally taken up at the meeting of the Socialist International in Amsterdam in 1904, and Revisionism was condemned in similar language to that used in the congress of the SPD in the previous year, though not without some ringing dissents from other French socialists, who alluded to the ill effects of the "germanification" of the International.

The SPD's international prestige and internal following continued to grow after this crisis. The elections of 1912 in Germany marked a particularly significant advance: The SPD won about a third of the vote and 110 of 399 seats in the Reichstag. Yet the party remained politically isolated, unwilling to ally with other parties and not much desired as an ally by them; a comparably large party in France or Britain would almost certainly have become part of a ruling coalition. Yet, even if a coalition of the SPD and other parties had been achieved, the fact remained that the Reichstag did not exercise authority comparable to that of the British Parliament or the French Chamber of Deputies. Although Wilhelm II had favored lifting the Anti-Socialist Laws in 1890, he remained an autocrat at heart, believing in the divine right of the Hohenzollern family to rule. Beyond that, real power in the Reich continued to reside in the Prussian Junker class (especially in the military leaders and the upper echelons of the state bureaucracy), in the princes of the various member states, and in the new industrial magnates. Bismarck in his last years had contemplated a more effective repression of the SPD; similar ideas were given serious attention by many leaders in Germany, in light of the SPD's growth and the prospect of its gaining a majority in the Reichstag within the near future. Especially after 1912, Bismarck's Reich seemed to some observers a locomotive speedily heading for a catastrophic wreck.

Russia under Nicholas II

Alexander III, tsar of Russia from 1881 to 1894, was a large, powerfully built man, reminiscent of Peter the Great. He cultivated an image of being gruff and severe, yet also kind and wise beneath his rough exterior. Alexander had come into power with what he considered a clear mandate: Wipe out the revolutionaries who had murdered his father, and take measures that would rectify the excesses and failures of liberal reform. Alexander's son, Nicholas, was a disappointment to him; the father shunned and bullied the son, at times mocking him as small (he was five feet, six inches tall), weak, and effeminate. When in 1894 Alexander died rather suddenly at age forty-nine, Nicholas, at twenty-six, was utterly unprepared to take over as all-powerful tsar. The western press generally praised him in his first years, in part because of the role he played in organizing the international peace conference at the Hague in 1899. Rumors spread that he, unlike his father, was open to liberal reform – and even that he was inclined to a more lenient policy in regard to his Jewish subjects. The rumors proved unreliable, particularly in regard to the Jews, with whom Nicholas would soon consider himself "at war," believing that Russia's Jews and the Jews covertly allied with them in other countries were out to humiliate him and destroy Russia.

The country over which Nicholas assumed rule was changing far more rapidly and extensively than he appreciated. Within a decade he would blunder into a disastrous war with Japan, thereafter badly mismanaging the popular unrest that arose from Russia's defeat, which led the revolution of 1905. The direction of Russia's economy and society since the early 1890s was a further blow to the narodnik vision of avoiding western Europe's capitalist stage. Western investment and technical experts were pouring into the country, and large industrial enterprises were being established in many areas. Peasants were abandoning their communally run villages in growing numbers to work in the new factories. They encountered an unfamiliar urban environment, in many regards similar to what workers in the early industrialization of Britain faced, with comparable turmoil and violent clashes with authorities.

The Appeals of Marxism in Russia and the Emergence of Leninism

Even before the 1890s, a number of narodniks had taken an interest in Marxism. That interest had much to do with the demonstrated failures of the narodnik movement but also with the successful model of the SPD and the spread of Marxism in the west. By the turn of the century, a capitalist stage did indeed seem to be inevitable for all countries, as did the working out of its internal contradictions and the formation of a revolutionary proletariat. Working-class unrest in Russia began to spread in the 1890s, and by the turn of the century had become severe in some areas. The revolution of 1905 reflected that surge as well as outrage over the war with Japan.

A Marxist party, the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, was formally established in 1898. It was modeled on the SPD but differed from it in a number of aspects, in the first place because such parties were illegal in Russia but more profoundly because Russia's stage of industrialization was much behind that of Germany and had so far produced relatively small numbers of proletarians. Of course, the SPD had endured a period, between 1878 and 1890, of semi-legal status, but that parallel to the experience of the Russian party was also deceptive, since the SPD had been allowed a parliamentary delegation in those years and millions of workers in Germany retained their right to vote, which many used to support the SPD. The Russian party, in its first stages of existence, was mostly leaders and few followers—little more than a band of intellectuals, living in exile and lacking regular or close contact with the lower classes of the Russian Empire. Moreover, the party was from the day of its creation crippled by intense factionalism. What Marx really meant was even more passionately debated among Russian Marxists than among Marxists in western Europe. That and other issues, including that staple of all politics, personal rivalries, led within a few years to factions so hostile to one another that they formed separate parties, known as the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

The debates within the Russian party are even more difficult to summarize than those that divided the SPD, but they can be traced back to the 1870s and a faction of the narodniks known as the Black Partition, a term associated with their claim that the peasants had a right to all the lands, not only those granted to them in the 1860s. The members of the Black Partition had stressed the importance of gradually raising the consciousness (*soznanie*) of the masses before a revolution could succeed, thus rejecting the terrorist notion of

the propaganda of the deed, a violent act that would spark the revolution. Subsequent discussions of consciousness and lower-class “spontaneity” (*stikhinost'*) or instinctual rebelliousness reached remarkable levels of subtlety in the debates of Russian Marxist exiles.

From those debates the position of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov eventually began to stand out. He became better known in later years by his revolutionary alias, Lenin. His argument, published in 1903 in the pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* (*Chto Delat'*?), was that under capitalism the rebelliousness of the industrial proletariat could reach only “trade-union consciousness” (that is, a recognition by workers of the need to organize for improved pay and working conditions) but could not evolve into a broader questioning of the emerging capitalist system. For the working masses to reach a higher awareness, Lenin argued, it was necessary for a party of professional revolutionaries to bring revolutionary consciousness to them, and to guide them firmly in seizing power, establishing a proletarian dictatorship, and introducing socialism.

A related issue, one central to the Bolshevik–Menshevik split, had to do with the kind of commitment necessary for a revolutionary leader, or “professional revolutionary.” For Lenin, with echoes of Nechaev, that commitment was necessarily all-consuming. His Menshevik opponents were willing to accept party members who were somewhat less “professional.” In 1917, these differences between the Bolshevik and the Menshevik factions became mixed into even more convoluted arguments about the nature of the revolution in Russia, to be taken up in Chapter 14.

Leninism has often been described as a characteristically Russian version of Marxism. Many have considered it a perversion of Marx's thought, decidedly *not* what he really meant. Moreover, critics have considered Leninism the opposite of an updated Marxism, in that Lenin allegedly inserted retrograde Russian-anarchist elements into it. Lenin, in contrast, maintained that he was reviving the Marxism of Marx himself, which had been drained of its revolutionary content by men like Bernstein and the trade-union leaders of western Europe. Much of what Lenin's western critics considered peculiarly Russian came down to tone more than content – that is, Lenin's intensity and his concern for revolutionary purity – but his critics insisted that his Russian origins showed especially in the concept of revolutionary elitism, which perhaps made sense in despotic Russia, with its vast and illiterate peasantry, but did not in advanced western countries.

As we have seen, there were western antecedents to Leninist elitism, notably in the ideas of Blanqui. However, Lenin's theories were more modern than Blanqui's in the way they meshed Marxist analysis of capitalism with revolutionary elitism and voluntarism. It is nonetheless obvious that Lenin was deeply influenced by Russia's narodnik tradition. His older brother, Alexander, had been involved in a narodnik conspiracy to kill Alexander III but had been caught in 1887 and sentenced to death. The young Lenin concluded that his brother's way was not the correct one, but he remained an admirer of the revolutionary courage and selfless dedication of the narodniks. The very question “what is to be done?” (*Chto Delat'*) came from the narodnik movement. The narodnik Nikolai Chernyshevsky had written a didactic novel with that title in 1863, and Lenin was a life-long admirer of it. The novel's hero, Rakhmetov, was a revolutionary who sacrificed everything for the good of the people. Chernyshevsky might also be classified as a proto-Marxist, in that he saw class conflict as a motor of progress and considered the toiling masses, not great men, to be the makers of history.

While Lenin may have given a peculiar Russian twist to the notion of revolutionary leadership, Marxists in the west in this period were also much concerned with how revolution was to be led. As the German social-democratic movement grew to attract millions of new members, many of its leaders expressed exasperation with workers as being intellectually lazy, concerned mostly with immediate pleasures, and inclined to alternate from apathy to violent rebelliousness. Those leaders thus concluded that the working class, even in a modern industrial context, required strong leadership, but of a rather different sort than that proposed by Lenin. Many of these leaders believed, ironically, that the only way the social-democratic movement could aspire to majority support was to drop its association with the revolutionary element of Marxism. A large part of the working class, especially those retaining religious faith, were put off by Marxist theory, and so too were the skilled and relatively well paid, who feared mob rule and the indiscipline of the unskilled. So strong leaders of the working class in the west needed to oppose revolution.

The Marxists were not the only ones who began to organize in Russia around the turn of the century. The narodniks came back to life in what was called the Socialist Revolutionary Party, still counting on the Russian peasant to support them. The Constitutional Democrat Party represented the rough equivalent of the liberal-democratic parties of western and central Europe (the name they became known by, Kadet, had nothing to do with the English word “cadet” but rather derived from the first letters, *Ka* and *Deh*, of the Russian words for Constitutional Democrat). All these Russian parties had to work outside the law, but their formation gives some sense of how Russia was moving toward western-European models.

The Russo-Japanese War, 1904–5

Tsarist Russia’s imperial aspirations paralleled those of France and Britain, although in origins the spread into Siberia and central Asia dated far back into Russian history. Russia’s aspirations to a position in the Far East clashed with those of Japan, resulting in a war, beginning in January 1904, that ranks as a turning point in Russian history. The armies and navies finally engaged in this conflict were huge; the battle of Mukden, in February–March 1905, involved more troops than any in human history to that point, approximately 900,000. The gigantic clash of the Russian and Japanese forces attracted military observers from around the world, hoping to learn lessons about what the next war might be like.

What they observed at Mukden, formally a victory for the Japanese, was a very costly battle for both sides (approximately 200,000 casualties, a third of them deaths). Japan’s victory was a surprise and shock to many Europeans. There would be more surprises of that nature to come. No doubt the most shocked were the Russians, whose military incompetence was on full display to the world. Nicholas II had been inclined, in meetings with his advisers, to refer to the Japanese as “monkeys,” but he soon discovered that these supposedly inferior non-Europeans had impressively mastered the techniques of modern warfare, on land and on sea. The Russian Baltic fleet, sent around the world, over 20,000 miles, met the Japanese navy at the Straits of Tsushima in May 1905 – and was annihilated. As noted, these humiliating defeats set in motion a series of shockwaves, helping to spread revolution inside Russia and notifying the world of Japan’s rising power.

Revolution and Reaction in Russia, 1905–14

Nicholas's incompetence in leading the war with Japan was further revealed in his response to internal developments. He refused to believe that his own loyal subjects were associated with the discontent spreading by the first years of the twentieth century; it had to be the work of "foreigners," which in his mind largely meant Jews, both inside and outside Russia. Nicholas typically used the vulgar *Zhydi* to refer to them, roughly equivalent to English "Yids," rather than the more polite *Evrei* (Hebrews). He was particularly impressed with reports that Jewish financiers – above all, the American Jacob Schiff – had floated loans to the Japanese while trying to block the Russians from getting them. He and his advisers also noted the large numbers of Jews among leading radical agitators.

In January 1905, a wave of workers' strikes in St. Petersburg was channeled into a plan to petition the tsar directly, asking for both economic and political reform. On January 22, a crowd numbering close to a quarter-million marched on the tsar's Winter Palace, singing patriotic songs and led by an Orthodox priest, Father Gapon, who had previously been active, with the support of the tsarist police, in organizing the workers on conservative Christian principles. The crowd included women and children, normally perceived to be sign of peaceful intent. Nicholas was actually not at the palace, but the security forces around the palace panicked, firing directly into the crowd, killing or wounding hundreds. This tragedy went down in revolutionary annals as Bloody Sunday, and was reminiscent of the Peterloo Massacre in Britain in 1819.

News of Bloody Sunday spread throughout Russia. The Little Father, in popular myth the tsar who cared for his people, now appeared exposed as himself evil. Wave upon wave of protest strikes rolled over the land, complemented by renewed unrest among the peasants. Social democrats, Socialist Revolutionaries, and Kadets scurried to give leadership to this groundswell of popular outrage. Revolutionary councils (*soviety* in Russian, soon known in anglicized form as "soviets") sprang up in the main urban areas.

An initial consensus seemed to emerge among the various political factions that Russia needed a constitutional government, one that reflected the principle of popular sovereignty and western-style civil liberties. Nicholas II stubbornly resisted, but he and his advisers soon became aware that they were facing more powerful forces than any tsarist government had in the past, to the point that they could no longer rely on the country's military to maintain order. In June, the sailors of battleship *Potyomkin* (*Potëmkin*), in the Russian Black Sea fleet, mutinied. In October the success of a general strike in Saint Petersburg called by the workers' soviet of that city persuaded the tsar to make concessions. He issued the October Manifesto, promising to grant civil liberties to the Russian people, with universal male suffrage and the establishment of a national parliament or duma.

The October Manifesto seemed a major concession, but it failed to satisfy many of the revolutionaries, mostly because they did not believe in Nicholas's promises. Their suspicions were entirely justified; Nicholas and his advisers played upon the divisions between the moderates and radicals, and in December he ordered the leaders of the St. Petersburg soviet arrested and put on trial for armed rebellion. A rising figure at this point, Leon Trotsky, was later a leading figure of the 1917 revolution and ensuing Bolshevik regime.

He gained wide attention for electrifying speeches at his trial. His Jewish origin did not go unnoticed.

The image of Jews as unusually threatening and destructive revolutionaries, cunningly able to mislead the gullible masses, would become a staple of Russia's right-wing organizations before World War I, and it was an image that would spread even more widely after 1917. That right-wing political organizations formed and began to take up the tsarist cause was a sign of the times, but it was also a paradox, in that the autocratic tsarist regime had previously been unreceptive to popular political initiatives, whether left or right wing. But, threatened by revolution in 1905, the government was more receptive to alliance with these "dark" forces, often referred to collectively if imprecisely as "Black Hundreds." In the years immediately before 1905, mob actions against Jews had taken place, most notoriously in 1903 in Kishinev, a bustling port city on the Black Sea with a large and rapidly growing Jewish population. Rampaging mobs destroyed Jewish homes and businesses, killing forty-five and injuring over 500 Jews. The Black Hundreds were believed responsible for inciting the mobs.

The Kishinev pogrom exceeded in bloodshed and destruction any previous modern pogrom, including those of the early 1880s in Russia; it became another kind of icon of the times, complementing the revolutionary message of the *Potyomkin* revolt. The Jewish poet Bialik captured, in searing verse, the disgrace and humiliation felt by Jews, "with trembling knees, concealed and cowering," over Kishinev. The issue of Jews fighting back, of no longer passively accepting misfortune as the will of God, became a major concern for a younger generation. Trotsky, defiant and courageous, became a hero not only for budding Marxists but for Jews of many other persuasions.

Pogroms across Russia escalated in reaction to the revolution of 1905 (as many as 600 were counted between 1903 and 1906). By this point, antisemitism as a political device to combat the forces of the left seemed, at least to some conservatives, to have a greater potential in Russia than in western Europe. The Russian form of Jew-hatred in the early twentieth century had a far greater lawless, violent aura to it than in western Europe. However, by the early twentieth century, events in France, above all the famous Dreyfus Affair (considered in Chapter 11), also gave the issue of antisemitism in western Europe a visibility and intensity it had so far lacked.

Between 1906 and 1914, the deputies of the newly elected duma lived a precarious existence, often harassed and arrested. In those years, under the direction of the tsar's able prime minister, Peter Stolypin, the government introduced legislation that allowed the peasants to separate from their rural communes and acquire private plots. Stolypin's reasoning was that Russian peasants could be transformed into a conservative force, as property-owning peasants had been in France in the nineteenth century. It was a promising start, in what seemed a far-seeing policy rather than one of blind repression, although Stolypin also became notorious for the harsh measures he introduced to repress revolutionaries.

Millions of peasants took advantage of the new legislation. This transformation of the Russian peasantry into "bourgeois" holders of private property might have eventually meant the demise of the narodnik vision, but Stolypin found only lukewarm support from the tsar and hostility from reactionary landowners. He was assassinated in 1911, while attending a theater, with Nicholas and Alexandra seated nearby. He was only one of a number of high officials to be killed by revolutionaries, including another key

minister, Vyacheslav Plehve. Both Stolypin and Plehve, and a number of other Russian high officials, were killed by Jewish assassins.

Further Reading

In addition to the books mentioned in the Further Reading section in Chapter 9, two influential works provide a scholarly but vivid introduction to the generation before 1914: Steven Aschheim's *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (1992) and Carl Schorske's *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1981). See also Michael Stanislawski's *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (2001).

Robert K. Massie's popular biography *Nicholas and Alexandra* (2000) provides an intimate view of the personal life of Tsar Nicholas II. Aside from Pipes's *Russia under the Old Regime*, the books recommended in the Further Reading sections in Chapter 11, Chapter 12, and Chapter 13, dealing with World War I and the Russian Revolution, have ample background chapters covering the generation from 1890 to 1914.

11 France and Britain in the Belle Epoque 1890–1914

The gathering clouds of internal strife that so concerned German and Russian leaders in the Belle Epoque also darkened the horizons of France and Britain. By 1914 Britain seemed on the edge of civil war over the Irish Question, and in France the Dreyfus Affair of 1896–1902 divided the country in ways that also suggested imminent civil war. Thus, even in those two model liberal-democratic states, issues arose that further put into doubt the long-range viability of western liberalism. That doubt had much to do with the shifting perceptions of what liberalism finally represented. Was it merely a stage of modern times, naturally evolving into a “liberal” form of socialism? Was it, on the contrary, a transient ideology to be violently replaced by something more disciplined and authoritarian? How could the core values of classical liberalism be reconciled with the changing realities of an advanced capitalism – to say nothing of an increasingly xenophobic nationalism and expansionist imperialism?

France in Turmoil

Although France in the 1890s had begun to emerge from its diplomatic isolation, French dreams of *revanche* (revenge) against Germany remained only dreams. It was all too obvious that France could not win another war against Germany, at least not in the foreseeable future. Germany’s rapid growth in population, impressive economic productivity, and fearsome military prowess made the prospect of revenge seem hopeless. Part of the French left even began to abandon revanchist dreams in favor of future cooperation with Germany. France’s growing empire in Africa and Indo-China tended to appease French yearnings for *gloire* and detract from preoccupation with the provinces

lost to Germany. Nonetheless, the humiliation of 1871 remained “a wound that will never stop bleeding,” in the words of a leading French statesman. The paranoiac nationalism so evident in Germany and Britain in the generation before World War I had an unmistakable French counterpart.

A series of domestic crises with foreign-policy implications in the three to four decades before 1914 also consumed much of the attention of the French public. The elections of 1871 had yet again returned a conservative monarchist majority, but still no candidate for king was acceptable to both monarchist factions, Bourbon and Orleanist. A republican state form was thus provisionally agreed upon in 1875. By the end of the 1870s, to the surprise of many, a solid majority in favor of the new republic, France's third, had begun to emerge. This republican majority to a large degree reflected the slowly forming conclusion of France's conservative rural population that a republic could be relied upon to be economically and socially conservative, not a plaything of the Parisian mobs and leftist militants.

Even with this emerging majority support, the Third Republic's political future remained in doubt, the divisions of France's population continuously ominous. These divisions found some of their bitterest expressions in the French version of the Europe-wide secular-religious rift, to the extent that historians have referred to a modern “religious war” in France, one that paradoxically seemed to excite the French population more than economic or social issues. Mention has been made of how controversial Ernest Renan's secular account of Christ's life became after its publication in 1863. In terms of the advance of secular values, the writings of Auguste Comte possibly exercised an even greater influence. Comte, like Renan, had cast off the Catholic beliefs of his youth and looked to a rational explanation of all things. He argued in particular that society could be understood “scientifically,” just as the physical world was understood (he coined the term *sociologie*, the scientific study of society).

That argument became a kind of dogma for much of the educated secular left in France. They believed that, just as scientists had come to understand the physical world, leading to cures of dread diseases, so cures of social diseases could be assured by understanding the laws of society. A new ism appeared in France, based on Comte's peculiar vocabulary, *positivisme* (perhaps best rendered into English as “scientism”). To declare oneself a “positivist” implied an unshakable belief in the powers of science – of hard, irrefutable facts, not fairy tales and fantasies. Positivism overlapped with what was termed “social Darwinism” in Britain.

French positivists dismissed traditional Catholic religion as representing a lower stage of human spiritual development. Positivists were alarmed, then, to witness the rapid emergence of a “fundamentalist” Catholicism in the 1870s, ardently embraced by large sectors of the common people. This revived form of the Catholic faith was spurred on by the Assumptionist Fathers, a religious order founded in 1845. The daily newspaper of the order, *La Croix* (The Cross), forwarded a reactionary political agenda but used the techniques of modern mass journalism. It especially attracted an audience of newly literate or semiliterate lower-class readers in France's small towns and rural areas. The Assumptionists played a key role in collecting funds, beginning in 1871, for the construction of the Church of the Sacré Coeur (Sacred Heart) in Paris, in atonement for the sins of the past, above all for the Paris Commune. *La Croix* regularly expressed detestation for what its editors considered the godless and corrupt politicians of the Third Republic.

The Ferry Laws (as mentioned in Chapter 9), enacted from 1879 to 1886, which sought to limit the influence of the clergy in France's primary schools, were one of several steps taken by secular republicans to counter this upsurge of popular Catholicism. From the standpoint of the Catholic faithful, the Ferry Laws, along with the Panama scandals and collapse of the Catholic bank (the General Union) in the 1880s were confirmations of their belief that France was ruled by an anti-clerical, hopelessly corrupt political class – prominent among them secularized Jews and Protestants that had as their goal to “de-Christianize” France.

The Dreyfus Affair

In the autumn of 1894, these simmering tensions found a compelling focus. What came to be called simply “the Affair” began with the arrest and conviction of Alfred Dreyfus, an army captain of secular Jewish origin, on charges of selling military secrets to the Germans. Evidence of his innocence began to emerge about a year after his conviction, and with it a metastasizing controversy. Dreyfus's name became better known than that of any Frenchman since Napoleon I, as one observer opined. The Affair thus involved much more than a trial or differences of opinion over the guilt of a single man. Its details became impossibly tangled, and some aspects of it remain disputed to this day, but, as so often in history, what was verifiable mattered less than what people believed to be true.

At first, even many of those who would later rally to Dreyfus's defense expressed satisfaction that that this particular Jew, unlike so many corrupt others in the past, had been caught and convicted. The probity of the army, it was claimed, prevented him from escaping justice through the bribery and backroom deals so typical of the parliamentary republic. For the Catholic right, Dreyfus's conviction was yet another confirmation of the belief that Jews could not become reliable members of the national community – and certainly should never be trusted with power. At a time when the perceived threat from Germany was rising, many traditionalists in France considered it shocking that Jews had so amply made their way into the upper ranks of the military that a Jewish officer was privy to vital military secrets (Dreyfus was a candidate for the general staff). Mobs gathered at Dreyfus's trial, chanting “death to the Jews!” Openly expressed hostility to Jews began to spread over France, with attacks on Jews in the street and violence to synagogues and Jewish shops. However, the violence never reached the scale it did in Russia, in large part because the French police were more vigilant in maintaining law and order.

Prior to Dreyfus's trial, modern political antisemitism had not developed in France to the degree that it had in Germany and Austria, but in 1886 Edouard Drumont's *Jewish France*, claiming that the Jews had taken over the country, joined Marr's *Victory of Jewry over Germany* as a modern best-seller, with over 100,000 copies sold in its first year. Drumont's work was more ambitious, and more scurrilous, than Marr's; it was a two-volume compendium of just about everything negative that Drumont could assemble about Jews in history, with a special emphasis on the role of the *Syndicat*, an alleged Jewish organization that antisemites believed was at work behind the scenes to assure that Jews exercised control of the French state and economy.



Figure 11.1 The caption reads: “What better place than in the bosom of the family?” Dreyfus was demonized by much of the French right, who thought Devil’s Island was the right place for him. Source: Private Collection / Roger-Viollet, Paris / The Bridgeman Art Library.

When Dreyfus’s arrest was announced, Drumont’s newspaper, *La Libre Parole* (Free Speech), which had earlier played a role in exposing the corruption surrounding the Panama fiasco, now warned that, even though Dreyfus had confessed to everything, his rich relatives would contrive to get him free. It was, however, not true that Dreyfus had confessed. Moreover, the evidence of Dreyfus’s innocence began to emerge, suggesting that army officials had been over-zealous, incompetent, or antisemitic in charging him and then in repressing evidence that another officer was the spy. Drumont and others on the antirepublican right disdainfully dismissed the new evidence as another Jewish trick; the *Syndicat* was at work. Much of France’s population, especially in Paris, soon divided into passionately hostile factions, known as Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards. Although generally reflecting the political left and right, respectively, these two factions saw former political allies, long-time friends, even family members driven to ugly confrontations on the issue of Dreyfus’s guilt.

That issue merged into a myriad of other issues and emotionally fraught symbols. For many anti-Dreyfusards, the central point became whether France’s army should be subjected to humiliation and destructive scrutiny by leftists whose motives and honesty were deeply suspect. Indeed, for some such anti-Dreyfusards, the innocence of the man,

Dreyfus, finally paled in importance compared to the threat of weakening a vulnerable fatherland by humiliating its army. For many Dreyfusards, however, the issue became one of justice, pure and simple, even if justice worked against the security of the state. In retrospect it is obvious that the Dreyfusards' sense of justice was filtered through a lens of suspicion for France's conservative, overwhelmingly Catholic military officers, comparable to the way that the anti-Dreyfusards saw leftist politicians and intellectuals through a lens of suspicion and contempt.

The Affair became even more explosive when France's best-known novelist, Émile Zola, entered the fray, penning a manifesto that eventually became one of the most famous in European history. Beginning with the words "I accuse!" (*J'accuse!*), Zola named names, accusing high-ranking army officers of lies and cover-ups. His many novels were known for their portrayal of French society as being in the grips of impersonal forces (class, race, disease) and were considered trash by much of the Catholic right ("positivist pornography"). Many conservatives needed only to learn that Zola was defending Dreyfus in order to become anti-Dreyfusard. Zola knew that he could not prove many of his charges (in fact, some were wild guesses that were later revealed to be unfair to some of those he named), but he saw it as a necessary gamble, with the goal of putting life into the case. In that regard he succeeded.

Dreyfus was finally brought back from his imprisonment on Devil's Island, a penal colony in French Guiana where he had experienced the tortures of hell for five years, and he was eventually exonerated after new trials (his and those of others involved). The victorious Dreyfusard republicans were able to firm up their control of the French parliament and state, and they then moved to clean house in the army. They also took further measures to weaken the Catholic Church. But the Affair lived on in memory. Many on the right continued to believe Dreyfus guilty and his exoneration a demonstration of the power of the Jews. On the left, it was believed with equal passion that justice had prevailed, and that corruption in high places had been powerfully exposed by brave and selfless citizens.

For a few years it seemed that the Dreyfusard victory might contribute to a more stable and secure republic, based on a cohesive left-center coalition, one that would be capable of more effectively addressing France's many neglected economic and social problems. That coalition consisted of Moderates (*modérés*, a middle-of-the-road republican tendency), Radicals (the more militant republicans), and Socialists (ranging from doctrinaire Marxists to cautious reformists). However, the cabinet instability of the previous years soon reasserted itself, as did the deeply entrenched corruption of France's political class, on both the left and right.

By the eve of World War I, some of those idealists who had joined the battle for justice and truth in defending Dreyfus had become disillusioned. Among the most memorable of them, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was Charles Péguy, a Catholic poet of socialist inclinations and an early defender of Dreyfus, whose book *Notre Jeunesse* (Our Youth), published in 1910, recorded what he described as a move from *mystique* to *politique*, from the lonely, courageous people with a shining ideal of justice in the beginning to the collection of cynical careerists at the end, manipulating and exploiting the Dreyfusard victory for selfish and sordid interests.

Another disappointed observer of the Dreyfus Affair, though in a different sense, was Theodor Herzl, a reporter for a prominent Viennese newspaper and widely recognized as the founder of modern Jewish nationalism, soon to be known as Zionism. This new

ism is often described as having sprung up in direct response to antisemitism, epitomized in Herzl's shocked conclusion (the result of witnessing French crowds shouting "death to the Jews") that Jews would never be fully accepted into any modern nation. He had up to this point considered France to be a model of modern toleration and universalist ideals, but after the Affair he wrote that "we [Jews] move where we are not persecuted, and our appearance then leads to new persecution. This is a fact and is bound to remain a fact everywhere." His answer to the Jewish Question, then, was for Jews to abandon hope of being accepted through assimilation; they needed to establish their own state, where they could become "normal," shaking off the defects, psychic and physical, they had acquired over centuries of persecution, exclusion, and disdain. At this point, however, Herzl, much like Lenin, was not much noticed by Europe's broader society (he died at forty-four years of age, in 1904).

French Socialism

Yet another sign of disenchantment and discord in France, or of the tug of a different mystique, had to do with the repercussions of the socialist Millerand's having joined the bourgeois-dominated, non-socialist coalition of republican defense formed in June of 1898 (as discussed in Chapter 10) at the height of the Affair. Millerand's period in office was judged deeply disappointing by many socialists; it was proof that class cooperation was an illusion and that bourgeois politics were inevitably corrupting. Out of office by 1903, Millerand moved steadily to the right, eventually, after World War I, becoming a notoriously antisocialist president of the republic.

The Socialist International's official denunciation in 1904 of ministerialism and class collaboration had the effect of pressuring the numerous socialist factions in France to unify, forming the SFIO in 1905. This party would endure into the late twentieth century; its French initials attested to the role of the International in its formation, standing for "French Section of the Workers International." The new party program contained a stipulation that socialists were not to enter any future cabinets of bourgeois parties, and instead were to work for an eventual Marxist-style victory in revolution, based on the support of the majority of the population.

Between 1905 and 1914 the SFIO grew steadily but still remained small compared to the SPD (with about one-tenth as many members by 1914). In contrast to the SPD, which was closely allied to the German trade-union movement, the SFIO was regarded with considerable suspicion by the CGT (the initials of the General Confederation of Labor, founded in 1895). The labor or trade-union movement in France, which also had a much smaller membership than its German counterpart, was known for its "revolutionary syndicalism" or "anarcho-syndicalism." French anarcho-syndicalists shared with the Catholic right a profound mistrust of the politicians of the Third Republic. At the same time they shared with the Marxist left a contempt for all things bourgeois.

In its heyday, roughly 1902–1908, the anarcho-syndicalist movement gained international attention for its espousal of the general strike, a spontaneous work-stoppage by all workers that at some point would dramatically bring down capitalism and the centralized state. They would be replaced by a decentralized state, ruled by local organizations of the working class. Working-class leaders in prewar Germany were divided over

the feasibility of a general strike in their country. Some saw it as inviting chaos and repression. One such leader angrily blurted, “general strike – it’s general nonsense!” In practice the notion of a general strike tended to be most attractive where trade unions were the weakest, in France, Italy, and Spain.

Perhaps the most widely influential discussion of the general strike, Georges Sorel’s *Reflections on Violence*, was published in 1908. Sorel’s writings had a quirky, almost Nietzschean quality to them, and like Nietzsche he has been credited with influencing men who later became fascists, most famously Mussolini. In Sorel’s view, class conflict and violence, rather than being repellent, were morally invigorating; the mystique (or the “myth,” as he called it) of the general strike was akin to that of the Day of Judgment for the Christian faithful. What particularly interested him was not the truth of such myths but rather the way that they could inspire moral fervor and heroic action, encouraging people to break with routine and rise above narrow self-interest.

To its conservative, largely Catholic critics, the Third Republic by 1914 remained what they termed *la gueuse* (the slut); its corrupt and quarrelsome political factions, they believed, tended to enhance rather than reduce social divisiveness. Later historians, too, have been critical of the Third Republic, in part because its last years have been evaluated through the prism of France’s utter collapse before the armies of Nazi Germany. In a similar way, the Holocaust has made the Dreyfus Affair stand out, offering proof, at least to some observers, that Herzl was right and that there was an ominously rising tide of antisemitism in the generation before 1914 that contemporaries failed to recognize.

It is revealing, then, to see how different things seemed to contemporaries in the immediate prewar years, when it was the survival of the republic and the victory of those who opposed antisemitism that were impressive. French Jews did not consider their future hopeless, nor did they try to leave France. Very few native-born French Jews were tempted to become Zionists, nor were most Jews in the countries of western Europe. France of the Third Republic remained for Jews from eastern Europe a highly desirable destination, where they could escape poverty and persecution.

Edwardian Britain

Queen Victoria lived until 1901, but one might say that the Victorian era had come to an end, in a figurative sense, a decade before her death. She had seen much change and no little adversity in her sixty-four years of rule, from the Chartist and antimonarchical agitation in her earliest years as queen, to the sudden death of her husband, Prince Albert, in 1861, to the various ministries of her least-favorite prime minister, William Gladstone. Her death, at eighty-one, was in a sense fortunate; the twentieth century had shocks in store for which she was completely unfit psychologically. Mention has been made of Victoria’s profound aversion to the idea of becoming the queen of a popular democracy. She similarly considered the notion of equal rights for women to be “a mad, wicked folly.” The so-called Suffragettes, those who agitated for giving the vote to women, deeply offended her: They were “forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety.” And, as Victoria lay dying, her empire had become mired in an ugly, dispiriting war in southern Africa.

Whatever Victoria might have preferred, a popular democracy was on its way, and with seemingly unstoppable momentum. The reforms of 1884 meant that Britain's electorate was becoming nearly as broad as those of Germany and France. By the 1890s, the prospect loomed that all adult males from the lower orders might be allowed to vote for members of Parliament. Britain's governing body was becoming less a clubby gathering of the rich and well-born and more like the German Reichstag, with its numerous working-class delegates facing their class enemies across the aisles.

However, it was not until 1911 that members of the British Parliament were paid salaries, making a political career somewhat more feasible for someone from the lower ranks of society. A decade earlier a new, separate party of the working class, the Labour Party, had been founded. Its initial growth was slow, and it did not at first embrace socialism in the sense of espousing collective ownership of the means of production. Its political stance might be termed simply left-wing liberalism, looking to piecemeal measures that benefited the poor, not to a fundamental transformation of capitalism within any foreseeable future.

The Liberal Party reacted to this competition from a working-class party to its left by formally abandoning its long-standing identification with doctrinaire laissez-faire policies and by more explicitly embracing the notion of an active or interventionist role for the state in economic matters. Starting in 1906 and lasting for about a decade, in what it called a "war on poverty," the Liberal Party introduced a series of legislative measures, including retirement benefits, unemployment relief, and health insurance for the poor. Taxing the rich to help support such social-welfare expenditures came in 1909, with legislation calling for progressive income and inheritance taxes.

The Liberal Party's leftward shift was troubling for many of its long-time supporters, but a particularly outraged and determined opposition came from conservatives in the House of Lords, with its large contingent of privileged, landed wealthy. The House of Lords had been able in the past to block legislation that affected the privileges of its members, but that option was cut off by the Parliament Act of 1911, which effectively ended the power of the House of Lords to veto acts of the House of Commons. Massive strikes by coal and railway workers in the years immediately following the passage of the Act made it clear that the new legislation failed to satisfy important elements of Britain's working class. This unrest was not quite the "pillage and massacre" that Victoria had earlier predicted would result with a democratic monarchy, but conservatives in Britain were growing ever more apprehensive about their future.

There were other reasons for alarm. The Irish Question would not go away. It seemed a "wound that never will never stop bleeding" for Britain, even more than the issue of Alsace-Lorraine was for the French. As we have seen, in the 1870s and 1880s, the issue of Home Rule split Gladstone's Liberal Party. Thereafter, Irish nationalists (Catholics in their great majority) adamantly refused to accept any settlement that did not include the incorporation of northern Ireland. The Protestants of the northern province of Ulster, where they constituted a majority, refused no less adamantly to be incorporated into a Catholic-majority unified state. After years of fruitless parliamentary maneuvering, a violent confrontation seemed in the making, as both sides began arming themselves. Faced with the prospect of civil war, members of Parliament finally passed the Home Rule Act in 1914. However, war on the Continent broke out while the exact terms of the act were still being worked out, and it was suspended.

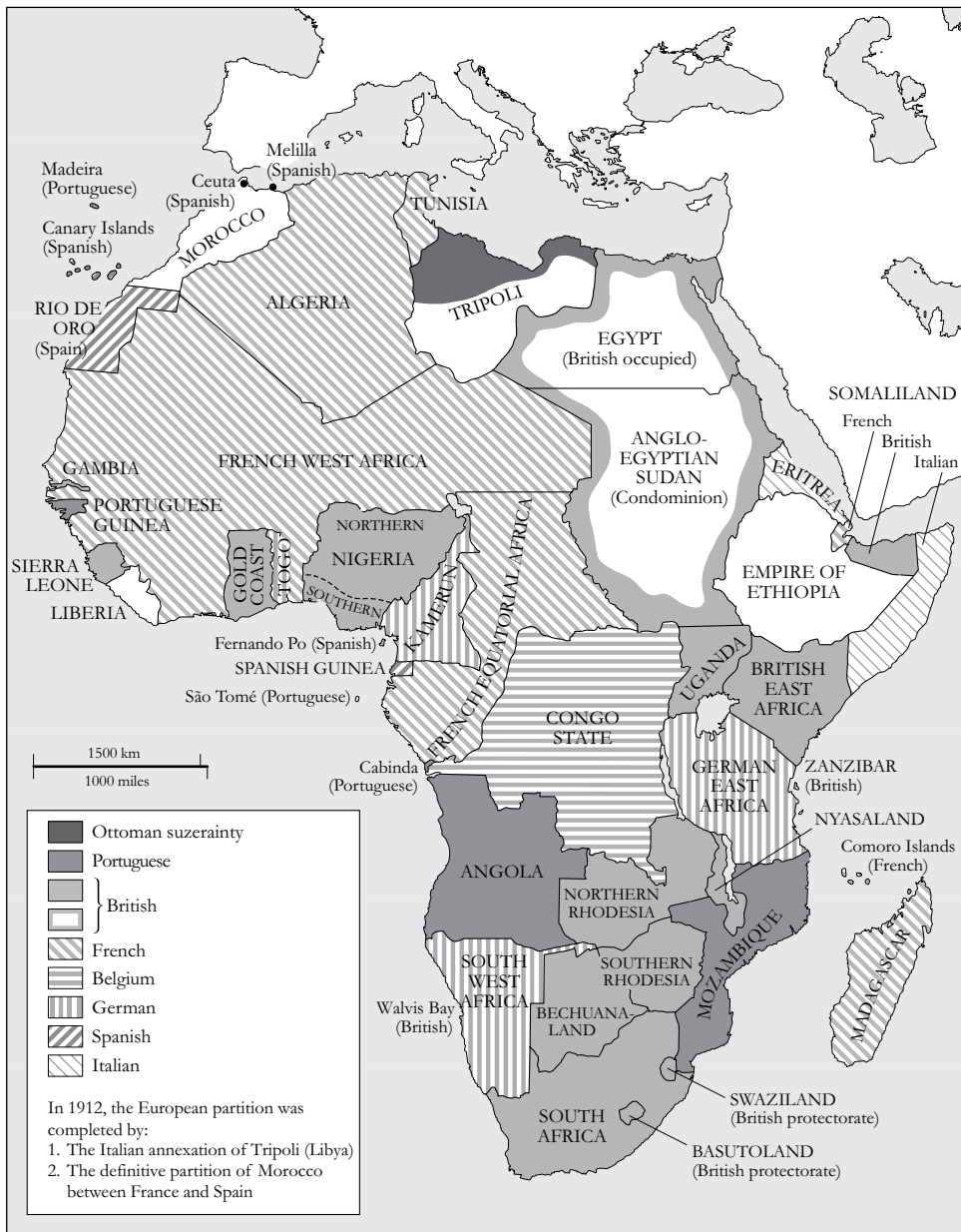
The patriotic wave that passed over most of Britain's population after the declarations of war (discussed in Chapter 12) in early August 1914 left much of the Catholic nationalist population in Ireland unmoved. Most Irish nationalists were inclined to view Germany, Britain's now-demonized enemy, in a favorable light, as a potential ally – "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." In Easter week of 1916, Irish nationalists staged a violent uprising in Ireland, its leaders proclaiming an independent Irish republic. By this time World War I had reached a desperate stage, and the response from London to the Easter Uprising was brutal: Treated as traitors in time of war, its leaders were court-martialed and summarily executed. The wound in Ireland continued to bleed, and worse was yet to come.

The Boer War

The Boer War (1899–1902) ranks as the most violent and morally distressing crisis faced by the British in the generation immediately before 1914. It overlapped the most intense years of the Dreyfus Affair and divided Britain in comparable ways, especially in the extent to which a newly literate mass population became engaged in issues of national prestige, urged on by the popular press of the day. Although antisemitism was not a major issue in the Boer War, it did arise in the charge that rich Jews had played an important role in provoking and then profiting from the war.

By the 1890s, Britain's empire, on which "the sun never set," had become a source of intense national pride, transcending class, region, and religion. But the acquisition and retention of empire also involved appalling brutality, by the British as by all European imperialists. By the late 1890s, what has been termed an "orgy of imperialism" and a "scramble for Africa" was under way. The reasons for this rather sudden expansion of European domination have long been debated by historians, particularly since only a few decades earlier there seemed to have been a widely shared distaste for colonial holdings. Gladstone thought Britain's empire was bound to disappear, and Disraeli described colonies as "a millstone around our necks." By the 1890s, contemporaries were vigorously debating both the value of the colonies and the issue of motivation: Was imperialism entirely selfish or also mixed with altruistic motives? Did the British population benefit significantly or was the empire in balance a drain of resources from the mother country?

Various trends already discussed played obvious roles in encouraging imperial expansion. Prominent among them was the rapid industrial growth of the period, with its awakened aspirations and perceived needs for various materials and commodities in scarce supply in Europe. The heightened competition between Europe's major powers, with the nagging worry that other nations would get ahead in the imperialistic scramble, was also a major factor. The populist hypernationalism of the day, fanned by the new yellow press, was typically associated with the imperialist cause. A related factor was the belief that the peoples of these non-European lands were incapable of ruling themselves and needed European assistance – medicines, technologies, and management skills. Finally, there was the sense that the Christian religion could bring salvation to benighted pagans. For those who no longer identified with Christianity there was the parallel sense that the moral level of Europeans was distinctly superior to that of the non-European world, and thus that a beneficial "civilizing mission" justified imperial rule.



Map 11.1 Imperialism in Africa.

Perhaps the simplest way of stating the matter is that Europe, for over a century growing more rapidly in population, self-esteem, and general power than any other area of the world, experienced a distinct spurt in its aspirations, crucially linked to its power to put those aspirations into effect. In these same years, the previously dominant

empires in much of the rest of the world were in various stages of weakness or decline. Seen in this light, there was a push and a pull, and an almost inevitable quality to the spread of a burgeoning European power to the rest of the world.

In the case of southern Africa, British aspirations to rule the area had involved repeated clashes with its various native tribes but also with existing European settlers there, known as Afrikaners, who were largely of Dutch origin (speaking Afrikaans, closely related to Dutch); many other Europeans added to the mix, along with some colonists from Asia. Hearty and hardened farmers of stern, fundamentalist religious convictions, the Boers, as the Dutch subgroup was termed, from the Afrikaans word for “peasant,” had first settled in the area in the seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century they stubbornly resisted British efforts to impose rule on them. The situation was complicated by the discovery in the early 1870s, in lands bordering British and Boer settlement, of large deposits of diamonds, and then of gold a decade later. Thousands of adventurers flocked to the area, much like the Gold Rush in California in 1849. In the 1830s and 1840s, many Afrikaners had retreated to the northeast from the west coast (their “Great Trek”), to establish independent republics. Conflicts and skirmishes with the British continued, however, developing into a year of full-scale warfare in 1880–1, sometimes called the First Boer War. In it, the British experienced humiliating defeats in several battles. Gladstone, the prime minister at the time and no fan of imperial expansion, concluded that the effort required to crush the Boers came at too high a price, and a peace treaty was signed.

In the interval between this first and the more famous second war, an international incident occurred that contributed potently to a change in the climate of opinion in Britain in regard to Germany. In 1895, Wilhelm II sent a telegram to President Kruger, of the Transvaal Republic, expressing his admiration and “sincere congratulations,” since Kruger’s followers had been able to defend the independence of the Transvaal “without calling on the aid of friendly powers.” When news of the telegram reached Britain in early 1896, its obliquely threatening tone set off a firestorm of indignation. The British were already feeling defensive, since many other European countries, including France, had expressed sympathy for the plucky Boers in standing up to the British bully.

The next, this time full-scale, war with the Boers was openly provoked by the British in 1899. It lasted over three years and was taken with a great deal more seriousness by Britain’s leaders, who finally committed over 400,000 troops to it, losing about 20,000. This war gained the enthusiastic support of many politicians and newspaper editors, who demanded that these irksome peasants be taught a lesson they would never forget. But the British forces again experienced initial reverses. The “Black Week” in December 1899 was especially mortifying. Thereafter even small victories by British forces were greeted with fervent celebrations and exultant headlines in the home country. Queen Victoria, for once united in sympathy with the nationalist masses and the yellow press, exclaimed, “We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat; they do not exist.”

Victory eventually came to Britain, but at a dreadful price. In response to the guerrilla tactics of the Boers, the British military rounded up families, women, children, the aged, and the ill, as well as native workers and servants, and imprisoned them in internment areas (or “concentration camps,” a new term at the time). British troops systematically burned the farmhouses of the Boers, killed their livestock, destroyed their crops,

poisoned their wells, and salted their fields. By the end of the war, some 25,000 Boer non-combatants and around 14,000 native Africans had died in the camps through neglect and disease.

The “pro-Boers,” a term initially conceived as an insult but then taken up proudly by those opposing the war, faced intense domestic hostility, similar to what the earliest Dreyfusards had experienced when coming to Dreyfus’s defense. But, as the cost of the war mounted, its critics gained greater support and took the offensive. One of the most influential of them, J.A. Hobson, in 1900 published *The War in South Africa*, denouncing the conflict and charging that it, and British imperialism generally, benefited a narrow clique of capitalists and financiers, often Jewish, but undermined the British nation as whole.

Hobson was a prolific author, having written a number of books in the 1890s dealing with the nature of modern capitalism, and he would continue to produce a book every few years for the next half-century. Two years after his book on the Boer War, he completed what was no doubt his most influential work, *Imperialism*. Hobson, like many others on the left, asserted that the distortions and contradictions of advanced capitalism were the main reasons for the orgy of imperialistic expansion in the 1890s. However much this resembled a Marxist position, Hobson did not consider himself a Marxist. Rather, he saw himself as belonging to an anti-imperialist left in Britain that dated back to at least mid-century. He argued that the vast sums being invested in the empire could be far more productively diverted to Britain’s home economy, serving to raise the wages of Britain’s laboring poor.

Among Hobson’s related points was that “if we would understand the economic and political import of the present movements,” the activities of rich Jews, the Rothschilds prominent among them, must be studied. This conclusion seemed to be much influenced by observations Hobson had made in Johannesburg, during his tour as a newspaper reporter during the first stages of the Boer War. The linking of Jews and the darker sides of capitalism had been a recurrent theme on the left in Britain, but it remained a minor rather than major concern. Like most leftists, Hobson had no sympathy for the anti-Dreyfusard cause, and he explicitly distanced himself from the political antisemitism that had appeared in Germany and Austria in the 1880s and 1890s. Along with most of the British left, he had expressed horror at the pogroms in Russia. He did not hold Jews primarily responsible for the ills of capitalism and was perfectly aware of the important role of non-Jews, prominently Cecil Rhodes, and imperialist politicians such as Joseph Chamberlain. Nonetheless, he gave ammunition to the more radical critics of the Jews in Britain and elsewhere who did not respect such distinctions.

The Woman Question

Victoria’s death occurred in the midst of the Boer War. Her demise also predated some of the more notorious activities of those women she had denounced as mad and wicked. In the decade before World War I, the cause of female suffrage was taken up with unprecedented audacity in Britain, eliciting front-page press coverage and disdainful editorials. In this arena as in so many others, the liberal ideals of reasoned debate and gradual reform were visibly losing their earlier allures, being replaced by passionate conviction and violent confrontation. Herbert Spencer, who had expressed support for

government action that would assure equal opportunities for those born poor and who also expressed support for the cause of equal opportunity for women, eventually recoiled from what he dismissed as the “screaming sisterhood.”

Part of the explanation for this militant surge was obvious: Parliament had over many years failed to pass any of the many bills put before it having to do with female suffrage. For many women in Britain, a supposedly model modern nation, this was a deeply frustrating failure. Emmeline Pankhurst, heading the Women's Social and Political Union, gained much notoriety as she and other members of the Union disrupted parliamentary meetings and marched noisily in the streets. In a period when anarchist assassinations and bombings had killed many prominent figures in Europe, the Suffragettes also turned to “direct action” or what others termed “terrorism” – breaking windows, blowing up mailboxes, and placing a bomb by the house of the Liberal leader, David Lloyd George. When arrested, they went on hunger strikes, and then were force-fed by the police. The only death directly associated with the Suffragettes, however, was that of Emily Davison in 1913: Carrying a banner demanding votes for women, at a fashionable horse race, she threw herself in front of a horse owned by the king and was trampled to death.

On the Continent there was no close parallel to the British agitation for female suffrage, but a number of women gained unusual public visibility or played prominent roles in ways that connected to the continuing debates about the Woman Question. Quite a few did get involved in assassinations (of anarchist rather than directly feminist inspiration), causing particular shock and outrage. Many leaders of the socialist left on the Continent maintained that only with the end of capitalism and bourgeois domination would it be possible for women to achieve genuine equality. In part for such reasons, a few women rose to prominent positions in Europe's socialist movements. Perhaps the most famous of them was Rosa Luxemburg, a brilliant intellectual associated with the revolutionary wing of the SPD. Her Jewish origin did not pass unnoticed by her enemies, but she also won much affection from rank-and-file workers.

The SPD counted many Jews in prominent positions, much beyond their 1 percent of the German population, as did other left-wing parties in Germany. Nonetheless, it would have been nearly inconceivable in these years for a woman, and a Jewish woman at that, to rise so high in a non-socialist party. The SPD's relatively unprejudiced record hardly signified that sexist attitudes, or negative attitudes to Jews, were absent in the party. Some of its leaders, while recognizing Luxemburg's value to the party's recruitment efforts, were known to grumble about her brusque manners, her intellectual arrogance, and her lack of genuine feelings of comradeship for other party leaders.

Given Russia's social backwardness, it seems paradoxical that women were more strongly represented in that country's revolutionary movements than in those of western Europe, but in fact many of the most famous women revolutionaries in western movements were Jews with roots in the Russian Empire. Among the most prominent of them were the anarchist Emma Goldman (American but internationally famous), Angelica Balabanova (prominent in the Socialist International; also Mussolini's lover before 1914, when he was a socialist), and Anna Kuliscioff (a major figure in the Italian Socialist Party). In July 1907, the daily *Forward*, a prominent American Yiddish-language newspaper, carried a news item of a sort that had become all too familiar by

this time: Frume Frumkin, a young Jewish woman, had been “executed on the gallows this week, after she was caught ... in the Moscow Opera House with a machine pistol, lying in wait for a government official.” She had only recently escaped from jail, after being arrested for plotting to kill other Russian officials.

A Jewish woman had been prominent among those who had assassinated Alexander II in 1881, and a Jewish woman would later attempt to assassinate Lenin. More typical was the case of Krupskaya, Lenin’s life-long companion, who had a Christian background and shared Lenin’s revolutionary political aims but still did the cooking and housework, devoting herself entirely to him. Many leftist leaders in France, Greece, Italy, and Spain had traditional marriages and harbored sexist attitudes; some of the more anti-clerical were known to oppose giving women the vote because they feared that women would vote as their priests, not their husbands, instructed.

The Victorian era had been a time when the differences between men and women were stressed in dress and in many other realms, but the intricate, wide-ranging implications of “female emancipation” were only beginning to be examined. The main issue still tended to be metaphysically conceived rights and human dignity, as distinguished from women’s equal ability (physical or mental) to do anything men could do. Gaining the vote for women was a key issue, but closer to the immediately felt needs of many women were such matters as equal property rights, birth control, and equal pay for equal work. The conclusion that the vote for women was a necessary first step was logical, but for many socialists a more fundamental step was “making the revolution,” since elections under bourgeois domination were inevitably manipulated by those in power. Still, this was a time of posing awkward questions and of breaking away from previous patterns, in the Woman Question as in so many other areas.

Further Reading

The definitive history of the Dreyfus Affair remains Jean-Denis Bredin’s *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus* (1986). A much briefer overview can be found in Albert S. Lindemann’s *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs, Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank* (1991).

Adam Hochschild’s *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (2012) is a best-selling volume constituting a powerful indictment of European imperialism. A revealingly different perspective is offered in Bernard Porter’s *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (2004). Thomas Pakenham’s *The Boer War* (1999) is a balanced and highly readable account of the war, in the company of many passionately partisan ones.

Melanie Philipps’s *The Ascent of Woman: A History of the Suffragette Movement* (2004) provides revealing information about the internal conflicts of the movement.

Barbara Tuchman’s *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World before the War, 1890–1914* (1996, 1st ed. 1966) can be described as a leading work of popular history, one of the author’s many best-selling books (see Chapter 12).

12 The Origins of World War I

Few topics in the history of modern Europe have provoked more interest and controversy than the origins of World War I, and for good reason, since that war unleashed the furies of the twentieth century. However, it is inadequate to focus on the war alone as a cause of the century's horrors. Communism and Nazism had roots back into the early nineteenth century and beyond. Similarly, it is not only the origins of the outbreak of the war that must be understood but the reasons that the war continued for so long and at such a nightmarish level of mutual destruction. Why, after the initial stalemate at the western front and the ensuing months of pointless slaughter in the trenches, were Europe's major powers unable to arrange a truce?

Events in the summer months of 1914, beginning with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in June, have been intensely scrutinized; the simplistic accounts that prevailed immediately after the war no longer satisfy, at least insofar as they pointed a blaming finger in the direction of a single nation or national leader. Profound forces were making a general war more likely, but the actual outbreak in early August now seems as much the result of accident and personal incompetence as of impersonal forces or dark designs by national leaders. Moreover, the near-hysterical enthusiasm for war that erupted in early August, gripping a large part of the general population in most countries, suggests that it was "the people" as much as their leaders that were responsible for this war.

Growing International Anarchy, Hypernationalism, Polarization of Alliances

Much has been said in previous chapters about the decline of liberal, rational values and the growing fascination with instinct and violence. Most accounts of the origins of World War I stress the weakening of the concert of Europe idea and its replacement by a growing anarchy in international relations. Historians have traced a related European hypernationalism, driven to new extremes by the raw passions of the masses. There was an obvious decline in the willingness of nations to confer with one another on their common interests in general peace. Even the conferences concerned with promoting peace, such as that in the Hague in 1899, in spite of high-sounding declarations, were marked by half-hearted follow-through.

This anarchy was linked to the ominous bipolarity of international relations that developed in the generation before the war, with Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy on one side (the Triple Alliance) and the Triple Entente (France, Russia, and Britain) on the other. This bipolar balance of power made it ever more likely, some historians have argued, that a local conflict, touching on the interests of a single major power, would not remain local but would draw in the other major powers. That danger had long been present in the idea of the balance of power, but after 1890 it became increasingly ominous.

Three insecure empires faced one another warily in the Balkans, but by the turn of the century the Ottoman Empire, “the sick man of Europe,” was in a state of acute disintegration. Austria-Hungary and Russia each had aspirations to take over areas that the Ottomans were proving incapable of ruling effectively. Austria-Hungary had already moved into Bosnia-Herzegovina, “occupying and administering” it since 1878, although the area remained in a purely technical sense part of the Ottoman Empire. Then, in 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina outright, intensifying suspicions about the Dual Monarchy’s long-range ambitions.

The notoriously fractious peoples of the Balkans had begun to aspire to independence, but the form in which such independence might be achieved was anything but clear. The Slavs south of the Danube river had taken up the term South Slav (or Yugoslav, *yug* being the word for “south” in the Serbo-Croatian language), and Serbia, a small, land-locked independent nation, aspired to play a role for the South Slavs similar to that of Piedmont-Sardinia and Prussia in the unification of the Italian and German peoples.

We have seen how Italy, while formally united in a political sense, remained a country deeply divided by regions, cultures, allegiances, and even languages, but the Italians at least had a clear geographical definition of their state as well as a common religious (Catholic) past. The South Slavs had neither, nor was it obvious which peoples were to be incorporated into a future South-Slav state. Although the various Slavic dialects they spoke had much in common, the Croats and Slovenes used Roman script, whereas the Serbs used a script based on the Cyrillic alphabet. Similarly, the Croats and the Slovenes had long been associated with the Habsburg Empire and were Catholic in religion, whereas the Serbs were Orthodox. Other South Slavs, notably in Bosnia, had embraced Islam, reflecting the long rule by the Islamic Turks. Nonetheless, a South-Slav nationalist mystique was spreading in certain elements of these populations.

By 1907 three traditional enemies, France, Russia, and Britain, had agreed to work cooperatively with each other, although only the French and the Russians were militarily allied by treaty. What became termed the Triple Entente was based on a statement of friendly intentions, of uncertain significance in a future crisis. Germany was allied not only with Austria-Hungary but also with Italy, forming the Triple Alliance, also an alliance of former enemies. Up to the mid-1890s, Britain's leaders had been inclined to benevolence or at least to tolerance in regard to their German "cousins"; some had even argued that the English and Germans, as members of the vigorous Germanic race, were natural allies. It was an awkward argument, since Britain's Celtic peoples, Welsh, Irish, and Scots, were not Germanic.

Whatever the importance of Germanic links, Wilhelm's bumptiousness had become hard to ignore or forgive. After the Kruger Telegram episode in 1896, he continued his probing and provoking. The most decisive step in alienating the British was Germany's decision in 1898 to build up its navy. Many Germans had come to believe, with Wilhelm and Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz at their head, that a much-enlarged navy was necessary in defending their newly acquired colonies. In a more general sense, German leaders, and ostensibly much of the German population, believed that a powerful navy was necessary for any great power. But that belief ran up against an axiom of British foreign policy, that Britain needed to maintain a navy that was stronger than those of the next two nations combined. In the next decade, Britain and Germany would pour national resources into a naval arms race. Thus, even these rising powers, the two most dynamic and industrialized in Europe, became increasingly fearful.

The period 1815–1914 has often been termed a century of general peace, but from the late 1890s to 1914 a number of limited wars occurred, among them the Anglo-Boer and the Russo-Japanese wars. The period was also one of constant diplomatic crises, many provoked by Wilhelm II, which tended to push the Entente members closer to one another. Two confused wars broke out in the Balkans, in 1912 and 1913, each with potential to develop into a general war. In fact, World War I has been termed the third Balkan war.

In the early summer of 1914, Europe's major nations faced one another in two armed camps, the tempers of each rubbed raw by events of the previous ten to fifteen years, their armies bristling with weapons of a destructive capacity that exceeded anything in the past. In such a light and considering the above-mentioned powerful impersonal forces, one can easily conclude that a general war was inevitable, or at least highly probable. A major theme of previous chapters has been the Faustian dilemmas of European history – the remarkable dynamism, creativity, and productivity of Europeans, which reached a pinnacle in the decades immediately before 1914. But there was a recklessness to this, a hubris (or heedless pride) leading to a *nemesis* (retribution), as in an ancient Greek tragedy.

An Inevitable War?

In his writings and speeches before 1914, Winston Churchill, often considered the outstanding statesman of the twentieth century, described war not only as unavoidable but also as beneficial. "We are not meant to find peace in this world," he observed, in

denouncing the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. He added, with words that recalled those of Smiles and Spencer, that the rivalry of nations, for all the pain and suffering it produced, also made for “betterment and progress.” Churchill had his detractors in these years; he and Wilhelm II were often denounced in much the same terms, as irresponsible war-mongers. Yet Churchill was not all that unusual in his evaluation of the effect of war; even a leftist like Émile Zola wrote that “it is only the warlike nations that have prospered. A nation dies as soon as it disarms. War is the school of discipline, sacrifice, and courage.”

The sense of the war’s inevitability diminishes, however, if one focuses on the concrete decisions made in the summer of 1914. Scrutiny of those decisions strongly suggests that many if not most of Europe’s leaders, including Wilhelm II, did not want general war. Moreover, they took steps to prevent it, and were surprised, even profoundly disturbed, when it broke out. Similarly, insofar as it is possible to measure popular opinion at this time, the evidence is that the great majority of Europe’s population did not yearn for a general war. Large numbers, especially on the socialist left, participated in antiwar demonstrations in July 1914, even threatening a general strike to prevent war.

The socialists and others on the left blamed capitalism for the rising tensions between states, but some observers argued the opposite – that European capitalism had so bound Europe’s economies together in common interest that general war would be completely irrational. One of the most talked-about books in the half-decade before 1914, and an all-time best-seller, was Norman Angell’s *The Great Illusion*, which made just that argument.

Yet there were undoubtedly those, especially among Germany’s highest military leaders, who had concluded that a general war was inevitable and that the time was ripe for one in 1914. The likelihood of a German victory in such a war was diminishing, they concluded, and the events of the summer of 1914 offered opportunities that would not likely arise again. In particular, they saw an opportunity to make it seem to the German population that Germany was fighting a defensive war against Russia – and, unavoidably, against Russia’s ally, France.

Precisely *why* those leaders believed in the inevitability of general war cannot be briefly or confidently described, but at the most fundamental level it seemed an article of faith for them that it was Germany’s destiny to become Europe’s new major power. They believed, similarly, that Europe’s other powers were determined to block that destiny. France, Russia, and Britain were encircling Germany, with the intent of slowly strangling it. In a related way, Germany’s military leaders feared Russia’s rapidly growing industrial strength; its potential power, given its size and population, was enormous.

The Role of Personality and Chance

In evaluating the actions of European leaders by the summer of 1914, the issue of unintended consequences or “accident” also arises. No doubt some people have more accidents than others, and it is tempting to conclude that, if the heads of state had been men of higher quality, war might have been averted. At any rate, the accidents of birth had decreed that Wilhelm II and Nicholas II were in power at this crucial time, while Franz Joseph was approaching his eighty-fourth birthday in 1914. For such

“accidental” reasons, those generals and nationalist politicians who actually wanted war had an easier time than might have been the case had more competent heads of state been in place.

During and immediately after the war, it became a point of supreme importance to be able to point an accusing finger at those responsible for starting the conflict. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, such finger-pointing seems ill-conceived. The war’s origins now appear too complex – too many factors, too many actors – to arrive at a simple judgment of “guilty or not guilty,” as might be done in a court of law. Still, even in courts of law, a hierarchy of responsibility is recognized (e.g., from premeditated murder to accidental homicide). Evaluating the war’s origins in that spirit can be thought-provoking, even if there is the further complication that we are dealing with multiple defendants, individual and national. In each country, the decision to go to war was not made by any individual within a brief period of time but rather by competing factions within each country and an accumulation of reactions to events that piled up.

The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

By focusing on the decisions of leaders in the summer of 1914, we are of course conceptualizing history “from above”; we are asking how European elites, 99 percent male, “made history,” and ignoring the role of the great mass of the population. However, by this time even those elites, accustomed to working without public scrutiny and generally contemptuous of the excitable and ignorant masses, amply recognized that popular opinion had to be taken into consideration, even if only to be manipulated. At any rate, it is undoubtedly the case that spontaneous individual acts “from below,” by the most ordinary of individuals, “made history” in the case of World War I.

Such an ordinary person was Gavrilo Princip, the young Bosnian Serb who assassinated the Habsburg heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife on June 28, 1914, at Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Princip, coming from a poor family of nine children, six of whom died in infancy, had experienced many personal hardships, failures, and rejections in his nineteen years. It seems that, partly because of his unimpressive physical appearance, he was determined to demonstrate his courage and manliness. He had somehow conceived a fanatical devotion to the cause of South-Slav nationalism, and in 1912 he had joined the Black Hand, a secret nationalist organization with obscure connections to Serbian officialdom. Members of the Black Hand passionately objected to Austria-Hungary’s rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and believed it should be incorporated into Serbia. Princip was provided with training, weapons, and bombs. He was also given poison capsules, so that he could commit suicide after the assassination, thus avoiding any confession that might reveal details about the Black Hand.

The assassination did not work according to plan. An initial bomb failed to do much damage, and then Princip found himself standing directly next to the archduke’s carriage, as its driver halted briefly, having taken a wrong turn. Seizing the opportunity, Princip fired at point-blank range, hitting Franz Ferdinand in the neck and his wife in the stomach. Blood streaming from his pierced jugular vein, Franz Ferdinand cried out “Sophie dear, don’t die! Stay alive for the children!” Princip tried to shoot himself in the head, but was prevented by the crowd around him. He swallowed his suicide



Figure 12.1 Gavrilo Princip is paraded by his Austrian captors after assassinating Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Sarajevo, Bosnia, June 28, 1914. *Source:* © Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy.

capsule but then vomited it up. Franz Ferdinand and Sophie were soon dead, but Princip survived (see Figure 12.1).

The many difficulties in evaluating the origins of the war include that of understanding Gavrilo Princip. How could he be so attached to an abstract nationalist ideal that he was willing to commit cold-blooded murder and then to sacrifice his own life? Unlike the infamous suicide bombers of recent times, he apparently expected no other-worldly rewards, no dark-eyed angelic maidens to caress him throughout eternity. Was his life so miserable, his future so bleak, that death of this sort was in some sense welcome?

This act of political murder set into motion a series of interconnected events, creating a vortex that sucked Europe's major powers into it. War spread from being a local conflict, between Austria-Hungary and Serbia (blamed for the assassination), to the rest of Europe, in part because Serbia was considered a little-brother Slavic nation to big-brother Russia, whose leaders thus felt honor-bound to come to Serbia's defense. The likelihood of war spread further because Wilhelm II quickly and imprudently gave his Austro-Hungarian ally a "blank check," promising German support for whatever was

necessary to punish the Serbs. Russian mobilization then brought into action Germany's long-standing Schlieffen Plan, involving an initial attack to the west on France, Russia's ally, to be completed within six weeks, and then rapidly moving military units across Germany to the eastern front, to deal with the slow-to-mobilize armies of Russia. Austria-Hungary's declaration of war was thus followed by declarations of war by Germany, bringing in France and Russia, and then Britain, once the German armies had violated the neutrality of Belgium.

Again, up-close these decisions seem somewhat less tightly connected. The assassination is no longer considered by most historians to be so decisive as once believed, in part because Austria-Hungary's leaders had drawn up plans to destroy Serbia *before* the assassination occurred. They thus found the murder of the archduke to be a useful pretext for war, not a fundamental cause or justification for it. Leading Austrian statesmen were in truth not driven by grief and righteous indignation in attacking Serbia, since Franz Ferdinand was notably unloved in governmental circles and his coming reign was viewed with apprehension by many.

We now know that the leaders of Serbia's government had not directly instigated the assassination, although certain lower officials did have contacts with the Black Hand. Historians also now have considerable evidence that Germany's military leaders, especially Helmut von Moltke, Chief of the German general staff, had concluded that war was inevitable and that the summer of 1914 was preferable to a later date. Present-day historians are less certain than were earlier historians that Russia's leaders felt compelled, because of the humiliations of the Russo-Japanese war and of the previous two Balkan wars of 1912–13, to support Serbia in an incautious or uncritical way, comparable to the blank check of Wilhelm II.

Nicholas was shocked by the assassination and certainly had ample reason to support the notion of prompt and severe punishment of assassins, since both he and his father had been the object of numerous assassination attempts. As noted above, two of Nicholas's ministers, Plehve and Stolypin, had recently been assassinated, as of course had Nicholas's grandfather, Alexander II. In fact, bombs and bullets had resulted in the deaths of a number of Europe's royalty, higher nobility, and leading political figures in the Belle Epoque. One might conclude that 1914 Nicholas had become justifiably emotional about the matter.

The belief by leaders of Austria-Hungary that South-Slav nationalism, if allowed to grow, would mean the end of the Dual Monarchy (as discussed in Chapter 7) is understandable, even if those leaders' willingness to pull all of Europe into war in the effort to crush that nationalism is less so. Germany's fear of an industrializing Russia now seems overwrought, but without question the prospect of Russia's notoriously brutal "Cossack hordes" streaming into Germany awakened the deepest kinds of fears throughout Germany's population. German perceptions of Russia's military mobilizations in late July 1914 exacerbated those fears, but there is little doubt that Germany's military leaders exaggerated the implications of Russian mobilization in order to justify the steps that they had already taken toward war.

Germany's plans for war had an intriguingly portentous twist to them, related to the German leaders' dread of fighting a two-front war against Russia and France. The above-mentioned Schlieffen Plan built upon Germany's strengths: its internal lines of communication, its efficient and well-developed railroad lines, and its well-trained

military. The plan (or, really, a series of repeatedly updated plans) was named after General Alfred von Schlieffen, who had retired in 1906 and died shortly before the war. His basic idea was to concentrate Germany's forces on the western front, attacking France in a sudden, broadly sweeping action, with a massive concentration of forces on the right or northern flank, rushing southward toward Paris and achieving victory within six weeks. Having crushed the French, the bulk of the German forces were to be moved immediately back to the eastern front, to face slow-mobilizing Russia.

It was a daring concept but highly complex in its details and perhaps unworkable, even by the unusually capable German army, since it left so little room for error or unforeseen complications. Another problem was that it involved marching German forces through Belgium. At least in a formal sense, Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality was what brought the British into the fray, although most historians agree that the British considered it utterly against their interests to allow Germany to defeat France again, which could mean German control of the coast along the English Channel, and German domination of the rest of the Continent.

From Euphoria to Stalemate Warfare

As the declarations of war were issued in early August and the armies began to move out, a wave of frenzied enthusiasm for the war rolled over most countries. This show of patriotic national unity was just what those on the conservative right had hoped for. In Germany, soldiers boarding trains to the front were accompanied by marching bands, cheering crowds, and women with flowers and kisses. Kaiser Wilhelm proclaimed, "I no longer recognize any political parties – only Germans!"

The general strikes that socialists had threatened came to nothing. An entry in the diary of an anarcho-syndicalist in France captured the mood: "On the first of August, morally reduced to dust, I was loaded into a cattle car with other soldiers who were bellowing, 'To Berlin!, to Berlin!'" The leaders of the SPD quickly declared their support for the German war effort. (A social-democratic leader later remarked that, if he had not supported the war, he would have been beaten to death by his own social-democratic followers). A young German Jew, up to this point active in the Zionist movement, expressed the belief that "the future of humanity depended upon Germany's victory." Even in Russia, scarcely believable scenes of national reconciliation were reported in the press: The notorious antisemite Vladimir Purishkevich entered a synagogue and tearfully embraced its rabbi; they would join together to defend Mother Russia.

These often bizarre enthusiasms no doubt had much to do with the belief by nearly all participants that they were fighting a defensive war and were facing imminent invasion from fearsome enemies. It was also widely assumed that this war would be short and decisive. But there was something almost mystical about the paroxysm of patriotic fervor in August 1914. Later observers have seen in it an expression of psychic release, of breaking free from the frustrations and uncertainties of the preceding years. Shining vistas of national unity and selfless heroism now appeared – an end to the rancor of faction and the humdrum existences many had been leading. Like the English poet Rupert Brooke, described at this time as a "golden-haired youth ... unprepared for the long littleness of life," many young idealists joined the fray with a startling passion. Millions of ordinary

Europeans seemed to share the sentiments of the twenty-five-year-old Adolf Hitler, who later wrote, "I fell to my knees and thanked heaven for permitting me to live in such a time."

Jean Jaurès, the widely revered French socialist leader who in late July had led a campaign against the growing threat of war, was assassinated by a nationalist fanatic. On hearing the news of Jaurès's murder, Charles Péguy was recorded as having let out a savage howl of satisfaction. He had once been an ally of Jaurès in defending Alfred Dreyfus, but the French nation had become his mystique, and within a short time he would find his own chance for heroic self-sacrifice: A German bullet smashed into his forehead at the Battle of the Marne, killing him instantly. He was forty-one years old.

It quickly came to appear that the clash between the French and the invading Germans would constitute a decisive stage in the war. If the Schlieffen Plan were successful and France quickly defeated, hopes for the Entente powers were slim. At first, the plan worked more or less according to schedule; the Germans smashed their way through Belgium, if with more difficulty than expected, and by mid-August German armies were within fifteen miles of the French capital. Parisians could hear the powerful new guns of war in the distance. But then in early September, in a battle that came to be known as "the miracle of the Marne" (in which Péguy perished), French forces, aided by a small British contingent, counterattacked near the Marne river and forced the German armies to fall back. Thereafter, both armies struggled to outflank one another, resulting by late December in a long line of entrenched forces, from the Swiss border to the English Channel. Repeated efforts to launch offensives that would break out of the stalemate proved futile; the lines remained largely the same for more than three years.

The French had developed their own plan, known as Plan XVII, which involved a concentrated offensive effort in the northeast, into Alsace and Lorraine, where the German forces were believed to be relatively weak. But Plan XVII was even less successful than the Schlieffen Plan, and the French forces were halted at the German border. Von Moltke, broken in health and spirit, resigned in the course of the Marne counteroffensive and was replaced by General Erich von Falkenhayn. Germany's generals now had to face the much-feared implications of a protracted war on two fronts. Time seemed to be on the side of the Entente in such a war, especially given Russia's vast resources and Britain's command of the sea, allowing it to tap the resources of its worldwide empire.

There was no little irony in the way that things developed in East Prussia in late August and early September: German forces won great victories – actually before the bulk of their reinforcements from the western front could arrive – ranking among the most brilliant in the history of modern warfare. Under generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff, German forces killed, wounded, or captured a quarter-million Russian troops at the battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. The war continued to rage on the eastern front until December, when Russia's armies, their munitions exhausted, switched entirely to the defensive. However, trench warfare never developed in the eastern front as it did the west, in part because of the enormous distances of the eastern front but also because the Russians were ill-equipped in artillery and machine guns. The final death rates, nonetheless, were comparable to those on the western front.

The Serbs, after seeing their country overrun in the first days of the war, launched a counterattack in November and soon regained their capital city, Belgrade. They then continued their push across the border into southern Hungary, at about the same time that

Russian troops were taking over much of Austrian Galicia to the north. Austria-Hungary thus faced its own two-front war. And yet a third front would soon open. Italy had declared its neutrality in August, maintaining that the treaties it had signed with Germany and Austria-Hungary applied only to a defensive war, whereas Germany and Austria-Hungary had started this one. The Italians were in regular contact with the Entente, and, under the terms of a treaty secretly signed in April, would declare war on Austria-Hungary in May (and against Germany in August), intent on acquiring a long-contested area of “unredeemed Italy,” including the Alto-Adige, or Trentino, northwest of Venice.

New fronts continued to open up in this first year of war. The leaders of the Ottoman Empire, fearing the designs of the Entente to partition their empire, joined the Central Powers (that is, Germany and Austria-Hungary) in October; the Entente then declared war against the Ottoman Empire in November. The Ottomans’ closing of the Dardanelles (the long, narrow straits connecting the Mediterranean to the Black Sea) to ships of the Entente presented a serious threat, since Russia, in dire need of munitions, was thus substantially cut off from its western allies. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, decided in March 1915 to send a large force to open the straits. That force finally consisted of over a half-million troops, mostly British, with around 80,000 French and smaller numbers from Australia and New Zealand. At the battle of Gallipoli (the name of the peninsula adjoining the straits), Turkish forces trapped the troops sent by Churchill, finally turning this risky operation into a catastrophe, recognized as one of the lowest points in Churchill’s long career, turning many bitterly against him for years. The final tolls were about 200,000 casualties (43,000 killed) on the Entente side and 250,000 (65,000 killed) on the side of the Turks.

The Dardanelles remained closed to the Entente, and the prospect of a short war receded ever more. A new era of European history had begun.

Further Reading

The issue of the origins of World War I, and in particular responsibility for it, produced a huge and contentious literature for many years. Niall Ferguson’s *The Pity of War* (1999) is a controversial but impressively documented rethinking of the issues, in particular whether the United States’ entry was justified (and whether Britain’s entry was a mistake).

Barbara Tuchman’s highly readable *The Guns of August* is characterized by fine writing and much colorful detail (winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1964), but nonetheless is seen by most professional historians as interpretively facile. Two excellent and relatively brief treatments, by professional historians, of the issue of the war’s origins are James Joll’s *The Origins of the First World War* (1992) and Joachim Remak’s *Sarajevo: The Story of a Political Murder* (2011).

Part IV The European Civil War

1914–43

Part IV (Chapters 13–20) covers the period from the opening stages of World War I to the eve of the defeat of Nazi Germany: three decades of turmoil, appalling destruction, and mass death. The period was characterized by two intensely ruinous stages, the first and second world wars (1914–19 and 1939–45). The uneasy peace of 1919 was followed within a decade by another kind of alarming crisis in the Great Depression, which spread despair and desperation to most of Europe's countries; many turned in authoritarian if not explicitly fascist directions. Developments from 1929 to the outbreak of World War II put into further doubt the already much-questioned verities of liberal parliamentary rule and free-market capitalism, as well as the viability of the nation-state system of Europe.

Nazism and Bolshevism had clear roots in World War I. “No Hitler, no Holocaust,” it has been plausibly argued. One might argue more sweepingly, “No World War I, no mass murder by Hitler or Stalin.” In World War I, Europe seemed locked in a suicidal conflict that defied reason and humanity. The war contributed decisively first to the collapse of the Russian Empire in early 1917 and ultimately to the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and German empires, but nearly all countries were profoundly weakened by it. Even once formal peace had been established between the major powers, civil war continued to rage in Russia until 1921. One might say that the dominoes put into motion in August 1914 kept falling for the next two decades, involving a number of local but extremely brutal wars, most notably Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1934 and the civil war in Spain, beginning in the summer of 1936.

After the collapse of tsarist rule in March 1917, the efforts of the Provisional Government to continue the war and reestablish order proved futile. The takeover by the Bolsheviks in November was a shock to much of the rest of Europe, and the meaning of that takeover was widely misunderstood, not only in late 1917 but for years afterward – and not only outside Russia but inside it as well. Part of the reason

for the misunderstanding was that the Bolshevik leaders themselves were uncertain about what they had in truth accomplished and thus what the future held. Lenin's series of cerebral strokes (beginning in 1922) and his death in January 1924 were followed by a power struggle among his lieutenants, with Joseph Stalin emerging victorious. Thereafter, Soviet Russia experienced a "second revolution" from 1928 to 1934, with the collectivization of agriculture and the five-year plan for rapid industrialization. In the late 1930s, another kind of revolution rolled across the Soviet empire, involving mass arrests and show trials that eliminated a large proportion of those leaders of the party who had been in place since 1917, as well as sending untold thousands of ordinary citizens to prison camps.

The peace settlement of 1919 proved no real settlement. It seems in retrospect almost as if it were designed to assure a future war. The apparent economic recovery by the mid-1920s proved short and illusory. Settlements arranged outside Europe, notably in the Middle East, also proved to be highly unsatisfactory, especially to the native populations. The inadequacies of the League of Nations and of Europe's liberal-democratic nations would become all too obvious by the mid-1930s, in failing to prevent Mussolini's aggressions in Ethiopia or Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War.

Roughly comparable to the dramatic events in Soviet Russia in the 1930s, Hitler's takeover in Germany in late January 1933 resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of most leaders of the left, although violence and death in Germany from 1933 to 1939 remained on a distinctly smaller scale than in those years in the Soviet Union. However, once World War II began, the so-called "Final Solution" to the Jewish Question, as well as the Nazis' treatment of prisoners of war, came to rival in wanton cruelty and brutal disregard for human life what had been going on in Russia since 1917.

The interwar years saw the rise of charismatic leaders on the right, Mussolini and Hitler most famously, with imitators of various sorts and varying successes in most countries. Coming to power in 1924, Mussolini presented Fascism as a new ideology, with a major emphasis on combating Communism, which was itself considered new, in the form it assumed under Lenin's and then Stalin's leadership (the term "Communist" was formally adopted in 1919 at the first meeting of the Communist International, the same year in which "Fascist" became more or less the official term for Mussolini's movement). A cult of leadership grew up around Lenin and Stalin, too, although it was somewhat different in themes.

In retrospect, it appears inevitable that violent clashes of these new ideologies and the countries ruled by them were in the cards, especially once Germany fell to Nazi rule. In September 1939, Europeans once again took up what would be termed "total war," one that soon became a world war, again drawing the United States into it, openly and explicitly after early December 1941.

13 | World War I

1914–18

Even after the opening battles, few observers fully appreciated the destructive implications of a long war using modern weapons, with the ability of nations to concentrate fighting forces and materiel as never before in history. Moreover, all governments succeeded in keeping the worst of the news from the general population. Another unexpected aspect of this war, one that flew in the face of much military thinking at that time, was that the techniques of military defense proved superior to those of offense. Not obvious in the opening weeks of the war, this change had profound and tragic consequences: The trenches, which in the West developed into intricate networks surrounded by barbed wire and defended by machine guns, proved nearly unbreachable. The war labored on and on, pulling millions to their deaths and millions more to agony and destitution.

Stalemate Warfare in the West and Expansion in the East

The term “machine gun” carried a modern industrial symbolism, as the mechanized production of death and destruction. The Germans’ enormous cannons, or howitzers, known as “fat” or “big” Berthas, first introduced in destroying Belgian fortifications, similarly became symbolic. World War I was not only more industrial than any previous war but also more all-consuming, mobilizing the civilian populations as never before in European history. The new weaponry was not the only or even the main issue. It was rather a combination of many factors, although the importance of some was exaggerated in later accounts. Airplanes were in their infancy, gas was used but proved



Map 13.1 Europe during World War I.

unreliable, tanks came into limited use only toward the end of the war. Most of the fighting was done by soldiers on the ground, with weapons in hand.

The generals on both sides during World War I continued to believe in the offensive: Victory would come, they confidently proclaimed, if only more willpower and courage and firepower were applied. They sent wave after wave of men out of the trenches and “over the top,” only to see them cut down by machine-gun fire. The wounded often died

gruesome, protracted deaths, lying in the mud and mire of what came to be called “no-man’s-land.” The lines of battle rarely moved more than a few hundred yards.

Much has been written about the ambitious and callous generals, who went to bed each night, after dining well, in clean sheets. But many common soldiers, enduring the cold and wet of the trenches, among fields of dead and dying, also seemed to retain a stubborn belief in their cause. At least in the opening years of the war, they not only obeyed commands but seemed to embrace the rhetoric of righteous struggle against demonic enemies. In early 1915, before the draft was instituted in Britain, enthusiastic volunteers flocked to army recruiting stations.

Still, many also believed the rumor that spread in the autumn of 1914: “the troops home for Christmas!” Planning for a long war was largely absent, and thus there was much improvising and uncertainty as the war continued without a clear prospect of victory for either side. General von Falkenhayn, stymied in northern France, turned his attention to the eastern front, in part to rescue the beleaguered Austro-Hungarian armies in Galicia. The brilliant initial successes at Tannenberg of Germany’s armies were then duplicated on a larger scale: In 1915, Russia’s armies were driven into a massive retreat, some 300 miles into the interior of Russia. More than 2 million Russian soldiers were captured, wounded, or killed. For the next several years, Germany’s military would rule over about 20 percent of Russia’s population.

Given the naval race before the war, it was only natural to expect that the fleets of Britain and Germany would meet in titanic clashes, but here too what actually developed was closer to a stalemate. It became clear that naval considerations were vital if the war was to be lengthy. France and Britain blocked all shipping destined for Germany and its allies, mistakenly believing that a blockade could so weaken Germany that it would eventually sue for peace. Many neutral countries, such as Holland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, whose economies were significantly based on trade with Germany, protested, as did the Americans. The rights of neutrals and “freedom of the seas” became a large issue.

In February 1915, the Germans declared, in response to this blockade, that they considered the western approaches to the British Isles and to northern France to be a zone of war; neutral ships that entered that zone could expect to be attacked. In the following month, a German submarine torpedoed the British passenger liner *Lusitania*, resulting in the deaths of 1200 passengers, 118 of whom were American citizens. President Wilson warned that any such acts in the future would be considered “deliberately unfriendly,” and for the next two years Germany curbed its submarine warfare.

The *Lusitania* in fact was not only a passenger liner but was also carrying munitions of war, not just civilian passengers. The German leaders felt that they were justified in using extreme measures to defend themselves in a desperate war for survival, and for a passenger liner to be carrying munitions was, they believed, a cynical ruse. The Americans, after they got into the war, would take up a position similar to that of the Germans in regard to passenger ships believed to be carrying munitions. In this, as in many other regards, distinctions between civilians and armed forces were breaking down.

Aside from these initial submarine forays, the naval high command in Germany remained reticent about challenging the British in the open seas. The major exception came nearly two years into the war, from May 31 to June 1, 1916, at the Battle of

Jutland, just off the coast of Denmark. Germany's leaders hoped to do enough damage to the British fleet to weaken its blockade of the North Sea. The Battle of Jutland was the only full-scale clash of battleships in the war. It was massive, involving some 250 ships, but was also inconclusive. In some regards it could be considered a victory for the Germans, since they sank more ships than the British and lost fewer men, but from a broader perspective it was a British victory since the German fleet never again challenged the British fleet in this way.

1916: The Battles at Verdun and the Somme

It was in the battles of Verdun and the Somme that the horrors of war reached a stage previously beyond imagining. Flush with his victories on the eastern front in 1915, von Falkenhayn turned back to the west, with a plan to concentrate enormous fire-power on the French fortress of Verdun, which was situated in France's northeast and surrounded by German forces on three sides. German bombardment began on February 21; something like 100,000 shells poured into the Verdun fortress in each hour of the opening barrage. In the following five months, both France (with British reinforcements) and Germany threw enormous resources into this battle. For the French, Verdun became a legend; their general, Henri Philippe Pétain, famously vowed that the Germans "shall



Figure 13.1 France, World War I, Battle of the Somme (July 1 to November 15, 1916), the British front. The battle developed along a front of some thirty kilometers, on both sides of the Somme river, between the German army and the Franco-British forces. It was the first time in military history that tanks were used. *Source:* Album / Prisma / akg-images.

not pass!" Von Falkenhayn in turn vowed that he would assail the French at Verdun until they were "bled white." The vows of both generals held, in that the Germans failed to take Verdun and the French were bled white – but so too were the Germans. Each side lost around 400,000 men, with little military advantage to one side or the other.

There was another massive clash at the other extreme of the northern front, conceived in part by the British and French to reduce pressure on Verdun: On July 1, the British launched their own first major offensive close to the Somme river. The battle began with a five-day artillery barrage, raining down some 2 million tons of explosives on the entrenched German forces. The Battle of the Somme, like that of Verdun, became notorious, setting a record in British military history: 58,000 British casualties (c. 20,000 deaths) *in one day*. The battle or series of battles along the Somme raged on until November, resulting in over a million casualties. Together the battles of Verdun and the Somme came to epitomize for many the futility of trench warfare and the madness of modern industrial warfare. In two years of war, much of the north of France had been turned into a moon landscape, and millions had died or suffered crippling wounds. Yet the generals were preparing plans for new offensives.

1917: A Turning Point

The battles of 1916 did make a difference in one sense: After them, the enthusiasm disappeared; men continued to fight, but more like robots, concerned primarily with trying to survive. Keeping up morale and discipline, both among soldiers and civilians, became a major concern of those in power. Soldiers did what they could to avoid front-line service, even to the extent of wounding themselves, and those not yet drafted into service were ever more inclined to search for ways to avoid it. On the home front, strikes by workers grew, as did class resentments. Grumbling by those on the battle front about the easy lives of the civilians became widespread. In Germany, anger on both the right and left was now directed at Wilhelm II, the "half-English" monarch who, many believed (not without reason) was losing his mind. In France, anyone who spoke out in favor of a negotiated peace was denounced as a "defeatist." Clemenceau, "the tiger," took over in late 1917, instituting what can only be termed a *de facto* civilian dictatorship, roughly comparable to the military dictatorship in Germany.

The year 1917 saw dramatic change in many areas, especially on the eastern front. Predictably, enthusiasm for the war had petered out first in Russia. The tsarist regime proved itself not up to waging modern warfare, unable to muster its military forces effectively for any extended period. By late 1916, Russia's armies, made up mostly of peasant recruits, ill-trained, poorly led, and often provisioned with disgraceful inadequacy, had experienced a series of dispiriting defeats. Labor unrest had risen to ominous levels in the autumn of 1916; the catalytic moment came when the forces of order were unable to contain bread and coal riots in the capital, initially led by housewives pushed to the limits of their endurance. Government troops, after initially firing on the protesting crowds, then refused to follow orders. Faced with overwhelming evidence of his loss of authority, Nicholas II abdicated in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Michael – who promptly abdicated in turn. The Romanov dynasty was over, collapsing like a house of cards.

That story will be more fully addressed in the next chapter. The implications of these events on Russia's continuing the war were at first uncertain. Leaders of the Provisional Government spoke of a more efficient and vigorous military effort, since the people were now in power. Similarly, since Russia had overthrown its corrupt, autocratic rulers, it became more palatable for the Americans to enter the war on the side of the Entente, as part of a war for democracy, not one of competing imperialisms.

For a short time, too, some of Russia's new leaders explored the possibility of a negotiated peace, but without success, which was hardly surprising, given the uncertainty about who was actually in power in Russia. Moreover, the German generals believed that they could still win the war, and thus peace negotiations held little appeal for them. And their calculations seemed justified, since it soon became obvious that the great majority of Russia's soldiers were in no mood for renewing the conflict, especially not under their present officers, against whom they were in sullen, sometimes violent rebellion.

The breakdown of authority in Russia was deeply alarming for France and Britain. Already in early February 1917, the German generals, feeling that no Russian offensives were to be expected, had resolved to return to unrestricted submarine warfare, as part of a broader decision to push for victory again by concentrating forces in the west. The decision was based on the gamble that, even if the Americans did declare war, Germany could defeat the French and British forces before American aid could become significant.

The French had their own plans for a new offensive. But the French Nivelle Offensive turned into yet another bloody fiasco, this time provoking mutinies in the French army. General Pétain, the hero of Verdun, was called in to gain control of the situation, which he did with a combination of repression and promises that no new offensives would be launched until the Americans had arrived in force.

The intervention of the United States on the side of the Entente marked another significant change in 1917, although it took many months before the American forces could reach Europe in adequate numbers to turn the tide. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, a large majority of the American population had been firmly opposed to American participation. There were, moreover, deep divisions among the various ethnic groups in the United States, many tending to sympathize with the Central Powers. From the beginning, Germany did not do well in the propaganda war, in part because the Americans got much of their news of the war from British sources. The atrocities of the German army in Belgium got much attention (and exaggeration), and the violation of international treaties by imperial Germany in attacking neutral Belgium corresponded to a long-established impression in the United States of Germany's militarism and cynical *Realpolitik*.

However, the actions of the tsar's armies on the eastern Front, especially in regard to the Jewish population, had been equally if not more discrediting. There was also much initial hostility in the United States to Britain over its blockade, and Britain's repression of the Irish Easter Uprising in early 1916 further alienated many Irish Americans. The isolationist position played to long-standing American traditions, and Americans did not experience the panicked fear of invasion that most Europeans did. Finally, Americans had ample time to contemplate the war's millions of deaths, its senseless destruction, and the seeming futility of trench warfare.

In retrospect, the speed of the change of American opinion to supporting intervention seems nearly unbelievable. Wilson, who had used the slogan "he kept us out of

war!" in the autumn 1916 presidential campaign, was able to persuade Congress in early April to pass a resolution, by a vote of 465 to 56, to join the side of the Entente. The Germans' resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, which meant a sharp increase in the loss of American merchant shipping and American lives, was important, but the last straw seems to have been the news, on March 1, 1917, of the so-called Zimmermann Telegram, a deciphered note from Germany's foreign minister to the German minister in Mexico, revealing plans to offer German support to Mexico in the recovery of lands lost in Mexico's war with the United States in 1848, should the United States declare war on Germany.

It was particularly important for Wilson to be able to present American participation in this war as protecting national interests (thus defensive) but also as a matter of high moral principle. He effectively forwarded those goals in his speech to congress, presenting a list of values that "we have always carried nearest to our hearts," including liberal democracy, the rights of small nations, and making the world safe for free peoples. Wilson's own long-standing pro-British sympathies no doubt played a role, even if Britain's record in matters of dealing with small nations was hardly above reproach. So too did a calculation, from the standpoint of American national interests, of the kind of world that might result if the Central Powers prevailed over the Entente.

The notion of a "war for democracy" prevailed over George Washington's warnings against "foreign entanglements." One might describe this shift as one of the most significant of modern times in its long-range implications. The United States entered massively into Europe's affairs. World War I, initially a war between imperialist powers, became, at least in propaganda, a war for democracy against autocracy. The United States also initiated a ruthless repression of those Americans who continued to oppose the war.

Zimmermann's clumsy efforts to lure Mexico into supporting Germany may be seen as typical of the ill-informed and poorly conceived directions taken by Germany's leaders at this time. Significant elements of Germany's population were becoming restive, especially after revolution broke out in Russia, and German workers staged mass strikes to protest the privations they were facing. In July 1917, the Reichstag passed, by a large majority, what was called a "Peace Resolution," favoring the immediate opening of negotiations that would lead to a settlement without territorial annexations or monetary reparations. The military and the political right in Germany dismissed the resolution as "defeatist" – and simply ignored it. Events in Russia, at any rate, were playing into their hands.

The Bolshevik seizure of power in early November ultimately led, after long negotiation, to the signing of separate peace with the Central Powers in March 1918, thus giving Germany's military leaders further confidence that they might still achieve a total victory, since they could move most of Germany's troops to the west. At the time, few western observers believed that the Communist regime could last more than a few months; its leaders' call for revolution to spread from Russia to the rest of Europe and the world was dismissed as ludicrous, although by early 1919 it came to be taken with mounting seriousness.

There was yet another development in November 1917 that is recognized, if only retrospectively, as being of profound historical significance. On November 2, Lord Balfour, Britain's foreign minister, formally announced that his government "viewed

with favor” the notion of “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. The text of its single paragraph put forth what seemed to be patently inconsistent goals, on the one hand favoring a Jewish homeland in an area then populated by an overwhelming Arab majority, and on the other stipulating that nothing should be done to undermine or diminish the rights of that majority population. The secretly negotiated Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916 had established spheres of influence in the Middle East for Britain, France, and Russia, once the Ottoman Empire had been defeated. Palestine was to be administered internationally, not by Britain alone (as was implied in the Balfour Declaration). No mention was made in the Declaration about whether a sovereign Jewish nation-state was to emerge eventually in Palestine, although many, including Balfour, believed that goal was implicit in a long-range sense.

The British government embraced this initiative for a number of reasons, prominent among them a concern that Germany might make a comparable declaration. Most British leaders were convinced that Jews exercised a powerful influence in world affairs, and it was deemed important to have them on the side of the Entente. However, what could be presented as high moral principle in extending sympathy to Europe’s oppressed Jewish population was not accepted as such by Arab observers. That violent resistance from the Arabs could be expected from their being treated in such a duplicitous and cavalier manner was emphasized by critics of the Balfour Declaration at that time, prominent among them many Jews. Some Zionists also expressed concern that, if the Arabs could not be peacefully reconciled to Jewish settlement in Palestine, the future of Zionism was bleak. But such a peaceful reconciliation was from the beginning highly improbable, and would prove ever more so for the rest of the century. However, the need that Jews came to feel for such a place of refuge grew rapidly in urgency in the following decades, as future chapters will describe.

Autumn 1917 to Autumn 1918: The Last Year of War and Germany’s Collapse

The German army, assembling forces nearly twice as large as they had been in August 1914, made rapid advances into the north of France in the spring of 1918. But they paid a huge price in lives – nearly a million German soldiers fell from March to July – and each advance proved short-lived. The gamble that France could be defeated before the Americans arrived in adequate numbers proved to be bad one, although it was not until June 1918 that American troops clashed with the German army to a significant degree. Nonetheless, it was widely understood that the American potential was tremendous; by June something like a quarter-million American soldiers were arriving each month. By July, German forces reached the Marne, but again a “miracle” occurred, aided this time by nine American divisions, and the German advance was definitively halted. American forces then played an important role in the counteroffensive in September that pushed the dispirited German forces back toward the prewar borders.

In late September, General Ludendorff advised his government that the allied French, British, and American forces were poised to invade Germany. With his prodding, the government asked for a peace settlement based on the Fourteen Points that Wilson had

announced in January 1918 (discussed in Chapter 15). Ludendorff's role was decisive, and his later claim that Germany's army was "stabbed in the back" by cowardly politicians was outrageously false. Nonetheless it was believed by many Germans, in part because defeat seemed to them to come out of the blue, given the war-time controlled press in Germany. Wilson had stipulated that he would deal only with leaders who represented the German people, and so a new, moderate chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, came to power, more or less representing the center-left parties that had backed the Peace Resolution in July 1917.

But revolutionary forces were building. When the sailors of the German High Seas Fleet were ordered to attack the British in a suicidal last-ditch battle, they mutinied. That mutiny then spread to the mainland, where revolutionary councils or *Räte* (the German equivalent of the Russian *soviety*) were forming, especially in the major port cities and the capital. Wilhelm, told by his generals that he no longer had the confidence of Germany's troops, took a train to the Netherlands, remaining in exile for the rest of his life. A republic was soon proclaimed, and on November 9 a German "Council of People's Commissars" was formed. As will be described in Chapter 14, the title chosen for this body was strikingly similar to that used by the Bolsheviks when they assumed power in the name of the soviets in November 1917. The German Council of People's Commissars was composed of six commissars, all social democrats. It appeared that a radical German revolution, a "Soviet Germany," was in the making.

November 1918: The Balance Sheet of War

Efforts to convey the wide-ranging implications of World War I inevitably fall short; the grisly statistics pile up in ways not easily assimilated. How many men of fighting age were left by the last year of the war? Any traveler to northern France to this day can gain at least a glimmering sense of the tragedy in the military cemeteries, the seemingly endless rows on rows of crosses, under which lie the remains of hundreds of thousands of young men. Similarly, anyone touring the small towns of France cannot miss the omnipresent World War I memorials in the town squares, with lists of local men who died at the front. France's losses in the Franco-Prussian War came to seem a mere scratch in comparison. And of course comparable remarks can be made for other countries.

Much of European history in the twentieth century might be termed the repercussions of the "Great War," as it was called at the time. For some the scars of war were points of honor; for others they were shameful, or constituted a ringing indictment of European civilization. Some loudly proclaimed "never again war!" Others found the war the most noble thing they had ever experienced. American entry tipped the balance in favor of the Entente powers, and by the end of the war the Americans had lost approximately 115,000 men, more than half of them through disease. The major European nations counted approximately 10 million dead in combat and 20 million wounded from August 1914 to November 1918.

In other ways, too, the price the Americans paid for this war was relatively small. Out of each hundred artillery shells fired in 1918 by the armies of the Entente, the Americans were responsible for six and the French and British for approximately forty-seven each.

No battles were fought on American territory, and at the end of the war the United States was stronger, more productive, and materially richer than when it had entered it. From being a debtor nation, it became Europe's creditor. All European nations involved in the war were, by a large measure, less strong, less productive, and less rich than they had been in 1914. Most Americans remained well fed and comfortably housed; much of Europe's population had experienced terrible privations and now faced a menacing future.

Those living in the former Russian Empire were in the worst shape, and for them things would get much worse from 1917 on, since the country soon plunged into a chaotic and murderous civil war that did not settle down until early 1921.

But the new rulers of the former Russian Empire had a revolutionary vision not only for themselves but for the world.

Further Reading

The following books emphasize the experience of war and the long-term memory of it, as distinguished from its origins (covered in Chapter 12).

Jay Winter's *The Experience of War* (1988) is a long-standard and respected account.

Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (2001) has been widely acclaimed and is far more than an account of the battles of the war.

Adam Hochschild's *The War to End All Wars* (2012), by the author of *Leopold's Ghost* (see Chapter 11), is yet another searing indictment of the war.

The most recent and generally best treatment of the Balfour Declaration and its implications is Jonathan Schneer's *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (2012).

14 Revolution in Russia

1917–21

Similar questions to those asked about World War I arise in regard to the role of impersonal forces vs. “great” personalities in the Russian Revolution. The Bolshevik stage of that revolution was obviously shaped by powerful impersonal forces but was also affected in undeniably crucial ways by the actions of individuals, in this case two particularly striking ones: Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

There is a related, often poorly understood, issue: What *kind* of a revolution did the Bolshevik takeover actually represent? Did it demonstrate the validity of Marxist theory? Or did it point to the inadequacies of that theory? Again, the issue of “what Marx really meant” arose, and yet again there were remarkably different opinions about whether Marx would have welcomed or rejected the Bolshevik Revolution. Trying to reconcile the intricacies of Leninist theory with the blunt realities of Bolshevik practice from 1917 to 1922 may ultimately be a fool’s errand, but it has nonetheless been an errand that many left-wing intellectuals have taken up with an impressive diligence.

A Proletarian Revolution?

Directly after November 1917, both Marxists and anti-Marxists tended to agree that the Bolshevik Revolution was not a proletarian revolution in any rigorous sense. The anti-Marxists considered such a revolution impossible (and of course undesirable). Many Marxists saw promising elements in it, along with some worrisome ones. They continued to expect a subsequent, more genuinely Marxist revolution in western Europe. Some looked to a time when the leaders of such a revolution would join hands with the

isolated Bolsheviks in Russia. In fact, expectations of that sort became crucial to Bolshevik justification of taking power when they did.

Of all Europe's major powers, Russia was the least industrialized, with a still-overwhelming peasant majority, in spite of the rapid economic advances in the generation before 1914. As a predominantly peasant country, Russia lacked, in Marxist terms, the "objective conditions" for a proletarian-socialist revolution. Those conditions included a class-conscious proletarian majority, abundant modern industrial enterprises, and high levels of productivity. However, Marxist theory in application to Russia could make a kind of sense if the collapse of the tsarist government in March 1917 were conceptualized as the opening stage of a *bourgeois* revolution, roughly comparable to what had happened in France in 1789. This preliminary bourgeois revolution would set up the next stage of development in Russia, during which capitalism, so far largely imported to Russia from western Europe, could advance rapidly.

Such was what some concluded was happening in Russia in early 1917, although reliable information about conditions there, especially about the exact nature of the Bolsheviks' accession to power in November, was not available in western Europe until late 1920. Even after that date, much about Bolshevik rule remained a source of puzzlement and misconception. Among Marxists this debate contributed decisively to the split of Europe's prewar socialist parties into hostile Communist and democratic socialist factions. ("Communist," as noted above, was a revived name, officially adopted in March 1918, replacing "Bolshevik" for the Russian party and to be adopted by all members of the Communist International.)

Conceptualizing the March Revolution as a bourgeois revolution meant that Russia was entering a stage of development that would require some time, presumably several generations, before objective conditions could evolve sufficiently to make a socialist revolution possible. But the Bolsheviks came to power within nine months. How could such a thing happen? Even more importantly, how could the Bolsheviks expect to retain power when so much of the population were peasants and certain to be hostile to the Bolshevik Party? Similarly, wouldn't the capitalist west do its best to crush this anticapitalist regime? Shouldn't the proletarian revolution succeed *first* in western Europe and then spread to Russia, rather than vice-versa?

Answers to these questions were offered by Lenin and other Bolsheviks, although those answers seemed to twist Marxist theory into oddly contorted forms, a tendency already evident in Lenin's prewar writings. Alongside the older question of "what Marx really meant" arose a related one: "What really happened in November 1917?"

The March (February) Revolution: Provisional Government and Soviets

Tsar Nicholas II's personal inadequacies, amply evident before 1914, became all the more painfully so during the war. His popularity had already plummeted after Russia's humiliation in its war with Japan and the ensuing revolution in 1905. In that same year, Nicholas and his wife, Alexandra, learned that Alexei, their only son and heir to the throne, born in 1904, suffered from hemophilia, a grave hereditary disease that prevents adequate clotting of the blood after an injury. Hiding the fact of the disease



Figure 14.1 Rasputin, surrounded by ladies at the court of the tsar, 1910. *Source:* © World History Archive / Alamy.

from the public, the despairing royal couple sought out doctors from Russia and abroad, without success. They then turned to faith-healers and quacks, finding a Russian holy man, Grigory Rasputin, who was able somehow to stop Alexei's bleeding. Rasputin gradually came to exercise an unseemly influence over the royal couple, especially Alexandra, to the extent that they listened respectfully to his advice on affairs of state (see Figure 14.1).

Rasputin became notorious for his coarse, drunken behavior at social gatherings, to say nothing of his sexual exploits involving ladies of the court. That a man of Rasputin's background and character could rise to such heights under Nicholas alarmed even conservative monarchists. On December 16, 1916, Rasputin was murdered by a group of nobles, at a time when workers' strikes and other signs of civil unrest had reached crisis levels, spreading to the military. As described in Chapter 13, Nicholas finally abdicated, and by mid-March a provisional government had taken over. It was initially composed of figures from the prewar *duma*, prominently from the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) Party. They were moderate and liberal-minded men, representing the hope that Russia could break decisively with its autocratic past and follow western-European models of parliamentary rule. Perceived as economically comfortable and westernized, these well-dressed men bolstered the belief that a bourgeois revolution was underway in Russia. However, they had been elected to the *duma* by a small part of the population and were hardly representative of popular opinion in the Russian Empire, especially after two and half years of disastrous warfare. The members of the Provisional Government implicitly recognized their shaky claims to legitimacy by promising that democratic elections to a Constituent Assembly would be arranged as soon as possible. After many rancorous postponements, the elections were finally set for the autumn of 1917. In the interval the Provisional Government also added a socialist, Alexander Kerensky, to its ranks.

More plausible claims to represent all of Russia, especially the lower orders and the men in uniform, were being put forward by organizations that had already played a role in the 1905 revolution, the revolutionary councils, or soviets. From the beginning, the soviet rank-and-file tended to view the men of the Provisional Government as members of a remote and privileged upper caste – “gentlemen” or “bourgeois” (*burzhui*, as the plural of the unfamiliar French word was rendered in the speech of the common people). Even Kerensky came from the educated upper-middle class. He was formally a member of the small Trudovik (Toiler) Party, socialist but non-Marxist and less inclined to violence than the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party, proclaiming itself to be the heir to the narodnik tradition and emerging in the course of 1917 as the most popular in Russia.

There were scores of nascent and often fractious parties in the soviets. For most soldiers, workers, and peasants the subtle ideological distinctions that were of such intense concern to the revolutionary intellectuals meant little compared to concrete, pressing issues (working conditions and distribution of food, allocation of lands, an end to the war). Votes in the soviets shifted erratically, not only because its delegates so readily changed their minds but because there was a constant turnover of those elected to these amorphous bodies. In this process there was a tendency for small numbers of relatively educated young men (and a few women), often lawyers or journalists, to rise to leadership positions in the soviets. Such was the case especially with those who could make effective speeches or compose party manifestos, as most peasants, workers, and soldiers could not.

In part because of the precedent of 1905, soviets spread with remarkable speed from Petrograd (as St. Petersburg had been renamed) to much of the empire in the early spring of 1917. Whereas only one socialist was represented in the initial Provisional Government, most soviets soon registered socialist majorities, with liberals constituting a shrinking minority in them. (Leon Trotsky, who had been elected to lead the St. Petersburg soviet of 1905, again rose to prominence. He initially stood outside the Bolshevik Party – he and Lenin had earlier engaged in personally abusive exchanges – but joined it in the late summer, and then played a key role in the Bolshevik takeover in November.)

The leaders of the soviets were at first reticent to claim direct governmental authority, in part because they feared that to do so would provoke the army generals to stage a military takeover. They tended initially to act more as monitors of the Provisional Government, with a de facto veto power, than as confident or assertive leaders. There was the further problem that the soviets were so unpredictable. Their meetings often descended into chaos; their leadership and operating procedures changed constantly. There were gaping irregularities in the way soviet delegates were elected, generally to the benefit of the urban working class and the detriment of the rural peasantry. The underlying principle of election to the soviets was radical-democratic but not quite “one man, one vote.” The soviets came to be conceived as the direct voice of the lower orders, explicitly excluding the *burzhui*, which meant not only the capitalists and large landowners but also military officers, church officials, and any who had served in official positions of the tsarist regime.

The “dual power” of Provisional Government and soviets in the opening months of the revolution was inherently unstable, especially since, as in the French Revolution,

there was a third power, the seething urban mobs that constantly pressured the soviet delegates. It is finally difficult to believe that any form of government could have responded adequately to the intransigent yet often contradictory chorus of demands arising across the Russian Empire at this time. The angry genie of revolution had been released and would not be easily calmed. Authorities were everywhere being challenged, and, of particular significance, by the summer months the authority of military officers over their men had often vanished. Workers were taking over factories, often assaulting their managers. Peasants were violently taking over the land of large landholders, and peasant-soldiers were rushing home from the front, weapons in hand, to get their share. National minorities were clamoring for independence. The pent-up resentments over the injustices, inefficiencies, and hardships of war mixed bizarrely into a euphoria of run-away expectations. Such had been the case, too, with the opening stages of the revolutions of 1789 and 1848: "The revolution" was going to solve everything.

But it did not, and could not. Quite the contrary, the revolution contributed to a massive breakdown of social discipline and economic productivity, rendering everything much worse. Deliveries of food from the countryside to the cities dropped to levels that threatened mass starvation. The Provisional Government felt mounting pressure from all sides, of a sort that moderate, propertied men, hoping to prevent chaos and preserve Russia's credibility with its war-time allies, were ill-equipped to satisfy.

A shake-up in May 1917 resulted in the addition of three more socialists to the Provisional Government and in Kerensky's taking over the leadership of it. But it was a case of too late and too little; adding yet more socialists in subsequent months also failed to make an adequate difference. The most divisive decision of the Provisional Government, finally a fatal one, was to continue the war. A new offensive in early July, against a much-weakened Austro-Hungarian army in Galicia, stalled and then fell apart. Russia's military front effectively ceased to exist, and most of the Russian army could no longer be considered a reliable fighting force.

Kerensky seemed for a while the man of the hour, at least to those who hoped that the revolution could be kept within moderate bounds. He was esteemed for his soaring oratory, but he lacked the decisiveness, astuteness, and utter ruthlessness of his Bolshevik enemies. The failure of the offensive in Galicia was soon followed by an insurrection in Petrograd, known as the July Uprising, which was widely blamed on the Bolsheviks, but it was in truth a mostly spontaneous action, driven by the Petrograd mob. The Bolsheviks did not plan it – nor were they able to control it – even if they had powerfully exploited the popular resentments that produced it. In Lenin's view, it was better to be wrong on the side of the revolutionary masses than right against them, and so the Bolshevik Party's leaders reluctantly identified themselves with the uprising.

Kerensky, acting on a belief that the Bolsheviks were the revolt's instigators, ordered the arrest of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin was able to escape in disguise to Finland, but many other Bolshevik leaders were captured and thrown into jail. Some 200 rebels were killed in street battles. It was widely concluded at that point that the Bolsheviks and other radical revolutionaries had overplayed their hand and had been deservedly crushed.

That was an entirely mistaken conclusion.

Lenin's Return: The Paradoxes of Bolshevik Theory and Practice

The drama and significance of Lenin's earlier return, in April 1917, from exile in Switzerland to Petrograd were subsequently much embellished in Bolshevik propaganda, but at that time his popular following was in fact small and his party in disarray. Even his most loyal lieutenants were puzzled by his April Theses, which bitterly attacked the Provisional Government and called for a soviet-led government ("all power to the soviets!"). The evolution of Lenin's ideas at this time is not easy to describe, in part because he so often changed position, yet he came to be accepted by millions throughout the world as the most eminent theorist of Marxism, and the revolution he and his party made came to rank as the model for future Communist revolutions. In truth, few at the time understood either his theory or his action, and to this day scholars debate both, although most agree that Lenin and his lieutenants were playing it by ear, so to speak, divided in opinion and not really sure themselves where they were headed.

Lenin claimed to accept the Marxist position that Russia must pass through a stage of capitalism, but his evolving conception of the nature of that bourgeois stage came close to denying its necessity – or to shortening its duration so much that it had little significance. He argued that, since the native bourgeois class in Russia was historically weak and obsequious, any bourgeois revolution in Russia would tend to slide back in reactionary directions. It was thus imperative that bourgeois leaders be constantly driven forward by the lower classes, toward the establishment of what Lenin termed a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." This was *not* a proletarian-socialist dictatorship as conceived by Marx and Engels but rather a peculiar, presumably tactical proletarian–peasant alliance, designed to assure that a securely progressive bourgeois revolution in Russia was established.

This cryptic formula was not widely understood (understandably!), and it opened a Pandora's box of implications. Prominent among them was whether the allied proletariat and peasantry, having succeeded in establishing a radical-democratic republic, could realistically be expected to relinquish political power to their class enemy – in effect declaring to the capitalists, "All right: We made the revolution for you weaklings. Now take over and exploit us!" Similarly, the slogan of "land, bread, and peace!" that Lenin and the Bolsheviks took up had little connection with Marxism and could plausibly be dismissed as pure opportunism, consisting of contradictory promises to the gullible masses in order to gain power – to hell with theoretical coherence.

The issue of the role of coherent ideological principle vs. opportunist hunger for power would remain central to the debates about the true nature of the modern Communist movement for the rest of the century. There can be little question that among the Bolsheviks were many true believers, powerfully under the revolutionary mystique, confident that they were acting in the long-term interests of the people. However, there is also little doubt that many prominent Bolsheviks were driven by a hunger for power – or became corrupted by the often brutal realities of exercising and retaining it.

In evaluating how and why the Bolsheviks were able to take power, one must also recognize how accessible political power in Russia had become by the autumn of 1917.

More accurately stated, political authority had become terribly weakened and dispersed, so much so that formal claims to control the existing organs of central political power (army, police, judiciary) had relatively little meaning. In a related way, events of an unpredictable nature and unexpected consequences played into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

For example, Kerensky's repression of the 1917 July Uprising gave rise to fears that he aspired to be the Napoleon of the revolution, planning to collaborate with the generals in establishing a military dictatorship that would destroy the soviets and reestablish firm authority in Russia. Whatever Kerensky actually had in mind, by early September his own fear was that the commander-in-chief of the Russian army, General Lavr Kornilov, had reactionary intentions that included the possibility of getting rid of him. In a panic, Kerensky turned for support back to those very revolutionary leaders whom he had only recently jailed, now freeing them and allowing them to rearm.

What became known as the Kornilov Affair, the threat of a military takeover, soon fizzled out; railway workers refused to transport Kornilov's troops to the capital, and most of his soldiers had little enthusiasm for repressing the soviets. By early October Lenin had returned from hiding, and the Bolshevik Party began to win majorities in a number of urban soviets, most importantly those of the workers and soldiers in Petrograd and Moscow. Concurrently, Lenin began to urge his fellow party leaders that they should make plans to seize power immediately: The opportunity to do so, following Kornilov's defeat, should not be lost, he argued. A similar opportunity might never come again.

So much for Marxist inevitabilities and the power of impersonal forces, but Lenin's reasoning, whatever its murky relationship to Marxist theory, did make a certain kind of practical sense: The other main parties had proved their inadequacies in dealing with the challenges of the revolution, especially its incipient anarchy and its run-away expectations. Now it was time for the Bolshevik Party, growing rapidly in popular support and at least relatively well organized, to show what it could do.

What, then, *would* the Bolsheviks actually do with their rule? There was a further key element in Lenin's reasoning: Proletarian-socialist revolution in Russia, under Bolshevik leadership, could be expected to connect with proletarian-socialist revolution in western Europe. Russia's role was to provide the necessary spark, the crucial inspiration to the so-far insufficiently bold proletariat of the west. Russia was the weakest link of capitalist imperialism, and breaking that link, as the Bolsheviks now claimed to be doing, would give a decisive opening to a new era of revolutions, leading to victory of Communism in Europe and ultimately the world.

It was an intoxicating vision, but it involved a wild gamble, so much so that a number of leading Bolsheviks resisted Lenin's urgings to take power in Russia before proletarian revolution in western Europe had actually appeared. They argued that such a revolution was too dim a prospect. Similarly, granting land to the peasants had to be counted as dangerously catering to "bourgeois" demands, since it seemed to recognize the right of the peasants to establish private plots of land formerly owned by the large landowners. Such a massive transfer of land to millions of private owners might be proclaimed as "revolutionary," but it could hardly be a sound basis for an immediately following Marxian socialist revolution. In the French case, giving land to the peasants after the events of 1789 led to the establishment of a politically conservative countryside, one that stood stubbornly against the left and the urban working class throughout the nineteenth century.

Of course, the narodniks had long maintained that Russia's peasants were different, more collectivist in mentality, from those in western Europe, and at this point peasants were voting in great numbers for the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Moreover, some more clearly socialist measures were also sanctioned by the Bolsheviks – for example, worker control of factories and the nationalization of the mineral wealth of the country. All power to the soviets, or soviet rule, might also be termed socialistic in tendency, since there was a socialist majority (loosely defined) in most of the soviets by late 1917. Nonetheless, it was tempting to conclude that, since the peasants constituted the overwhelming majority of the country, the part of the Bolshevik program that was “objectively bourgeois” had to be considered its most significant. This conclusion was all the more tempting since the more industrially developed sectors of the Russian economy, where proletarian numbers had been highest and Bolshevik support relatively firm, had shrunk dramatically in the chaos of the period. This trend was to become much worse, finally spawning a mass exodus from the urban areas to the countryside after late 1917.

The Mechanics of the Bolshevik Seizure of Power

However theoretically confusing the revolution that Lenin advocated, the actual seizure of power by the Bolsheviks on November 6–7 turned out to be remarkably easy, involving few real battles and relatively little bloodshed. Kerensky had lost too much support to be able to offer effective resistance to the Bolsheviks. That he had alienated the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison by trying to send them to the front was probably crucial; those soldiers now supplied weapons to his enemies. The sailors of the Kronstadt naval base, in the bay outside Petrograd, had been for some time among the most ardent supporters of the Bolsheviks; they now sent the cruiser *Aurora* up the Neva River, leveling its guns on the Winter Palace, where Kerensky and the Provisional Government held their meetings. Throughout the city, bridges, telegraph stations, and other key locations were promptly secured by Bolshevik-led forces.

Trotsky played a central role in managing the takeover, making use of his position as head of the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, a body that had earlier been established in anticipation of Kornilov's move on the capital. Kerensky made a few feeble efforts to resist but was soon obliged to flee. He tried for a while to rally forces outside the capital, but he found few willing to join him. He escaped to western Europe in 1918, and afterward to the United States, to endless exile.

The Bolshevik-directed takeover was timed to coincide with the planned meeting of the second general congress of the soviets (the first had met in June). Once that congress had convened, its members gave their stamp of approval to the Bolshevik destruction of the Provisional Government. A new ruling body was set up, the Council of People's Commissars, that was directly responsible to the soviets. It was entirely Bolshevik in composition, with Lenin at its head and Trotsky serving as minister of foreign affairs.

“All power” had now been assumed by the soviets. Or had it? It was the Bolshevik Party leadership that had actually planned the entire operation, not the leaders of the soviets, and now members of the Bolshevik Party controlled the new executive body of the soviet government. Therein lay another subtle but nonetheless crucial point. The Bolshevik Party did not enjoy a secure majority in the second congress (c. 300 of its 670

delegates were Bolsheviks). Most of the delegates had come ready to vote for a transfer of power from the Provisional Government to the soviets, but not necessarily to approve the initiatives taken by the Bolshevik Party in violently driving Kerensky from power and setting up an entirely Bolshevik Council of People's Commissars. In fact, a number of Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary delegates to the soviet congress bitterly criticized the Bolsheviks for what they termed a coup d'état. Even some Bolsheviks initially preferred, against Lenin's fiercely expressed desires, to see a broad socialist coalition. But no effective opposition to the Bolsheviks' monopoly emerged.

The word that went out to the rest of the country and to the world was that "the Soviets" (rather than the Bolshevik Party) had taken over from the Provisional Government. The Bolshevik Party alone would rule Russia for most of the twentieth century. That rule was always through the soviets in a purely formal sense, but it increasingly involved manipulating the votes to the soviets and following Leninist principles of one-party rule. According to those principles, formal majorities had little real meaning and could be ignored by professional revolutionaries, who were guided by a higher consciousness (*soznanie*).

The Constituent Assembly

A strong competing claim to speak for all of Russia came with the elections to the Constituent Assembly, which were held throughout the month of November. Arrangements for these elections had been initiated in the spring by the Provisional Government, and all parties, including the Bolshevik Party, had expressed support for them. Given the size of the country and the turmoil that prevailed in many areas in 1917, holding such elections was an ambitious project, but one that by most accounts was successful in the sense that a large part of the population of the Russian empire actually participated in it, certainly far more than had participated in the vote for the second congress of the soviets.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly, unlike those to the soviets, were based on universal suffrage, male and female over age twenty, with a special category of eighteen years of age for members of the military. The Socialist Revolutionaries, generally regarded as the party of the peasantry, won c. 40 percent, the Bolsheviks 25 percent. The Bolsheviks were not as disappointed by this mere one-quarter of the vote as one might assume, since they still registered often impressive majorities among the urban workers and the soldiers, two elements of the population that were relatively cohesive and thus more easily mobilized than the widely scattered peasantry.

When the Constituent Assembly finally met on January 5, 1918, it refused to accept the legitimacy of rule by the Council of People's Commissars. However, Lenin simply denounced it as a counterrevolutionary body and took measures to prevent it from meeting again. The apathy with which the general population greeted the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly reinforced the confidence of the Bolsheviks. The leaders of the other socialist parties did denounce the dispersal, but most nonetheless refused to be associated with armed opposition to Bolshevik rule.

There were many reasons for this feeble opposition to the Bolsheviks on the left. Probably most important was the ever-present prospect of civil war, which left-wing

leaders feared would result in the victory of reactionary forces. Similarly, the other socialist parties were bitterly divided among themselves about appropriate action. Most seemed to believe that Bolshevik rule, given its strong working-class support, represented a fundamental step forward, to be defended as “progressive” if also criticized as illegitimate in method. These divisions and the unwillingness to resort to violent resistance to what was viewed as a new workers’ state may finally be considered more significant to the initial Bolshevik success than its discipline and ruthlessness, both of which grew markedly in the months and years following November 1917.

Civil War in Russia: The Red Terror

The formal Bolshevik victory in the autumn and early winter of 1917–18 by no means meant that the Bolsheviks had established effective rule over all of the former tsarist empire. For some time they did not even control the local soviets in many parts of the country. Those leaders on the political right and center in Russia were inclined to view Bolshevik rule as some sort of freakish accident, one in which criminal elements – not “real Russians” but mostly fanatical Jews – had exploited the chaos of 1917 and momentarily taken up the reins of state power. The leaders of France, Britain, and the United States were similarly inclined to consider the Bolsheviks to be mindless fanatics, incapable of ruling all of Russia for very long.

However, when the new Bolshevik government called upon Europe’s warring governments to negotiate an immediate peace settlement, without annexations or reparations, most of Europe’s leaders were alarmed – and also embarrassed when the Bolsheviks published the secret treaties the tsarist government had made with the other Entente powers. In early December, the Bolsheviks began unilateral peace negotiations with Germany, but military leaders in Germany, since they held so much territory, were not tempted by offers of a peace without annexations. And, although the Bolsheviks energetically resisted the harsh peace terms presented to them by the Germans, they lacked real bargaining power, given the collapse of Russia’s military forces. In March 1918 Bolshevik representatives reluctantly signed a peace agreement at Brest-Litovsk that entailed massive losses in Poland, the Ukraine, Finland, and the territories of the Baltic region.

France, Britain, and the United States soon began giving support to the anti-Bolshevik armies that were forming on the periphery of the areas under Bolshevik control. Even before those armies began to march, the Bolsheviks had faced internal resistance, including a number of assassination attempts. On January 1, 1918, an assassin’s bullet narrowly missed Lenin, wounding a companion near him. *Pravda*, the party newspaper, warned that “for every one of our deaths, our enemies ... will answer with a hundred of theirs.” Nine months later, after delivering a speech that ended with the words “with us there is only one way, victory or death,” Lenin was gravely wounded by a young woman, Fania Kaplan, who had previously been associated with the Socialist Revolutionary Party. On the same day (August 30), another prominent Bolshevik, Moisei Solomonovich Uritsky, was assassinated by a young revolutionary, Leonid Kannegiesser, also previously associated with the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

Uritsky was the head of the Cheka, or secret police, in Petrograd. He had been denounced by right-wing opponents of Bolshevik rule as the personification of “Jewish

terror against the Russian people.” However, his assassin, Kannegiesser, was also Jewish, as was Kaplan. The Cheka had been created in December 1917, its name derived from the first Russian letters, *che* and *ka*, of the “Extraordinary Commission of Struggle against Counterrevolution, Speculation, and Sabotage.” The Cheka quickly became the most feared organ of the new regime; its establishment constituted a major step by the Bolsheviks in the direction of actually exercising power with force, as distinguished from associating themselves with the breakdown of central rule throughout the country. Another large step in terms of being able to exercise power was taken in the next month, January 1918, with the establishment of the Red Army, with Trotsky at its head.

The term “terrorist” retained long-standing associations with the European revolutionary tradition, dating back to Robespierre’s terror of 1793–4. The Bolsheviks explicitly accepted the association and openly defended “Red Terror” as necessary to defend the workers’ state against the emerging “White Terror” of the counterrevolutionaries. But Robespierre’s terror had lasted about a year and killed a few thousand; the Red Terror developed into something far more ruthless, pervasive, and long-lasting, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands and the torture and imprisonment of many more.

By March 1918, then, the Bolsheviks had not only begun to impose their will with ruthless violence but had also dealt with the “land” and “peace” elements of their 1917 slogan. “Bread” was more difficult to provide, but efforts to do so came in the form of “War Communism.” The new rulers of Russia aspired to regulate the distribution of food and to equalize the overall allocation of goods. Under War Communism, obtaining food for the cities involved sending out armed units of workers to force peasants, often at gun point, to give up what they had stored.

In many areas, brutal class conflict, or war between the city and the country, was the result. Still, at least some peasants were inclined to cooperate with War Communism, since they feared that the enemies of the Bolsheviks would reverse the land seizures that the new regime had recognized. But everywhere there was uncertainty and confusion; the civil war drew in an array of mutually hostile factions, often mixing in the aspirations of non-Russian nationalities to become independent of the new Soviet regime. Stomach-turning cruelty occurred on all sides.

Many foreign observers doubted that the rag-tag Red Army patched together by Trotsky could survive a civil war in which White armies were attacking from all directions, with support from the western powers. But the Red Army did survive and finally prevailed. Its victory must rank as more impressive and more decisive than the assumption of formal state power in November 1917. The reasons for this surprising turn of events were many. Perhaps most important was the lack of coordination and mutual hostilities of the anti-Bolshevik armies, whereas Bolshevik forces benefited from internal lines of communication. Trotsky, with no military background, nonetheless gave inspired leadership to the Red Army, while its soldiers, or at least significant numbers of them, fought with determination. Still, the Red Army was poorly armed and only relatively strong. The inspiring words of what became a famous civil-war marching song – “The Red Army is the most powerful of all!” – might more truthfully (if less inspirationally) have been “the Red Army is not so weak as all the others!”

Even if deceptive promises and the ruthless application of terror were essential to the takeover and continued rule of the Bolsheviks, their ultimate success in retaining power is difficult to explain without recognizing the support they enjoyed from significant

parts of the population. However, by late 1920 and early 1921, the Bolsheviks had to recognize that even their working-class support was faltering, while peasant acquiescence was turning into active opposition. A decisive point was reached in early March 1921, when, following strikes by workers in Petrograd, the Kronstadt naval garrison rose in revolt: The Bolsheviks were accused by those in the garrison of betraying the promises of the November Revolution. The rebels called for genuine soviet rule rather than Bolshevik party despotism.

Trotsky, once a great hero to the rebellious sailors at Kronstadt, dispatched a detachment of the Red Army to crush the revolt. A bloodbath ensued. The immediate crisis was surmounted, but Lenin and much of the party recognized that the days of Bolshevik rule were numbered unless important concessions were made. War Communism was abandoned in 1921 and replaced by what was known as the New Economic Policy, or NEP, which involved a partial return to market principles. Peasants were no longer to be forced at gun-point to turn over their crops and were gradually given permission to sell some of their produce on the open market. Although the state retained what Lenin termed the “commanding heights” of the economy, small-scale urban businessmen were permitted to sell for profit.

The Failure of Revolution in the West

The hopes for revolution in the west, most fervent from late 1918 to mid-1920, proved to be illusory and, along with War Communism, were abandoned in early 1921. Those hopes had survived in part because of the Bolsheviks’ lack of reliable information about conditions in Europe. The situation in Germany by the late summer of 1918 had seemed the most promising to the Bolsheviks and, from a Marxist perspective, it was the most important because of Germany’s high level of industrialization. As noted in Chapter 13, however, the German Council of People’s Commissars resembled that of the Bolsheviks in name only. To begin with, it had not forcefully taken power from Prince Max but rather had accepted it from him (a fine but crucial point in terms of claims to legitimacy). Moreover, it had been formed only to act as a temporary government, until regular elections could be held. Although the six members of the German Council were all social democrats, formally Marxists, they were equally divided between revolutionaries and moderates; the Council’s leader, Friedrich Ebert (in later years president of the new German Republic), belonged to the staunchly antirevolutionary branch of the SPD. He was, to say the least, no Lenin, and the Russian model held no appeal for him; western-style elections were the only acceptable basis for long-term legitimacy in his view.

Ebert was determined to prevent a repetition in Germany of the events in Russia, and, instead of backing away from a military alliance, as Kerensky had done in regard to Kornilov, Ebert accepted offers of support from the German military to help crush the German revolutionary left. At this point, that left lacked both a unified leadership and an agreed-upon revolutionary doctrine. Many talked vaguely of “doing as they have done in Russia,” with precious little understanding of what that actually was. A confused and ill-advised uprising in January 1919, more or less led by a group calling itself the *Spartakusbund* (after Spartacus, the leader of the slave revolt in ancient Rome), was bloodily repressed by right-wing forces.

Thus, the German revolution from the beginning took a distinctly different path from that of the Bolsheviks. The different German path reflected not only decisions by leaders but also deeper realities, in that the German military, though reeling, was much less weakened and discredited than its Russian counterpart had been. Indeed, the German general staff would remain an independent power with great prestige well into the Nazi period. Similarly, the German state bureaucracy did not disintegrate as the tsarist bureaucracy had, nor did Germany's major political parties experience the discredit that Russia's did in the course of 1917. In purely practical terms, the Germans, defeated in war, with food supplies dwindling and still blockaded, understood all too well that the Americans, with their abundant food supplies, would be hostile to a Communist Germany. The idea of copying or even allying with Soviet Russia at this point seemed suicidal to many Germans, including many on the socialist left.

Revolution in central Europe, resulting from the collapse of Austria-Hungary, opened other opportunities for Bolshevik-style revolution, but most of the new regimes, or successor states, set up at the end of the war assumed a nationalistic anti-Communist stance. Thus, the Polish proletariat failed to rise up to welcome the Red Army as it entered Polish territory in 1920. A Polish counteroffensive then drove the Red Army back beyond prewar borders. In Hungary, a Communist-style soviet regime came briefly to power from March to August in 1919, but that takeover also resembled the Russian model only superficially, the main similarity being that the Hungarian Communists came to power because their opponents were weak. The Soviet Republic of Hungary was brutally crushed by anti-Communist forces in August. Another Communist takeover briefly occurred in the former kingdom of Bavaria (part of the German Reich), but it was easily crushed. That most of the Communist leaders in both Hungary and Bavaria were Jews, in fact, in higher relative numbers than in Russia, was widely noted. Adolf Hitler began his political career in Bavaria at this time.

With victory in World War I, British and French leaders faced their own restive left-wing parties from a position of relative strength. Although the left in western Europe was undoubtedly larger and more angry than before 1914, proponents of violent revolution remained a disorganized minority. All indications were that a heavy majority of the general population in Britain and France opposed a proletarian dictatorship. In free elections many voted for candidates from ultra-nationalistic and anti-Communist parties. In December 1918, immediately following the armistice with Germany, the main theme of the "Khaki Elections" in Britain was a call for vengeance, with such slogans as "Make Germany pay!" and "Hang the Kaiser!" The mood in France was no less xenophobic. In the elections of October 1919, the National Bloc, a coalition dominated by right-wing parties, ably mixed angry nationalism and fear of Communism: Lurid posters, featuring a hairy, Jewish-looking revolutionary with a bloody knife between his teeth, appeared throughout France, warning of the horrors that a vote for the left would entail. The Socialist Party (SFIO) was soundly defeated in the elections.

In 1919 the Bolsheviks began strenuous efforts to establish Communist parties in western Europe based on Bolshevik principles, but the results were feeble. The Bolsheviks founded the Communist International (or Comintern, also called the Third International), which held an impressive congress of aspiring revolutionaries in Moscow in the summer of 1920. At the same time the Red Army seemed to be marching victoriously into Poland. The Comintern oversaw the creation of Communist parties in all European countries,

but the newly formed Communist parties, splitting off from the democratic socialist wings, failed miserably in making revolution, and the Poles successfully counterattacked against the Red Army. By early 1921, as Soviet Russia moved toward the New Economic Policy, western Communist parties tended to lapse into the position of waiting for the next revolutionary wave. Their Marxist convictions assured them that new revolutionary conditions would appear – and they would then be prepared.

What “Really Happened” in Russia between November 1917 and March 1921?

From the perspective of the early twenty-first century, European Marxism and Russian Bolshevism both qualify as historic failures. That judgment was by no means so widely accepted in the early twentieth century as it would be after the collapse of the Soviet empire at the century’s end. Still, to describe the November Revolution and Bolshevik rule in the 1920s and 1930s as “successful” is problematic. At most, the Bolshevik regime became a symbol of future possibilities. The promise or deeper meaning of the Bolshevik Revolution remained highly contested, even within the Communist movement.

There was no question that Russia in 1921 was an incomparably poorer place than it had been at the outbreak of the war. Something like 20 million of those living within the confines of the former Russian empire had died, and millions more had suffered terrible tragedies (homes destroyed, children orphaned, loved ones lost, dreams scattered to the winds). The industrial growth that had seemed so promising from 1890 to 1914 had been wiped out, and the former Russian Empire had dropped from being a great power to what could be described as a highly vulnerable peasant republic in which mass starvation stalked the land.

The peasant majority in Russia was ruled by a dictatorship of the proletarian minority, or, more accurately, by a dictatorship of the party that claimed to speak for the proletariat, even if much of that proletariat had also grown hostile to Bolshevik rule. And, even within the Bolshevik Party, “democratic centralism” came to mean rule from the top by an entrenched party elite, all of whose members had come to rely on Lenin to assure party unity and coherence.

Paradoxically, this alleged party of the proletariat had overseen the reintroduction of a kind of capitalism to Russia. Without the spread of proletarian revolution to the advanced economies of the west, the precarious, contradictory Bolshevik regime seemed destined to fail. Yet perhaps the situation in Soviet Russia could be termed something radically new and paradoxically modern, not really Marxist and in subsequent years to be termed “totalitarian.” If so, could it possibly still be termed “progressive”? Or was it rather the beginnings of something quite different, that would be a nightmarish parody of the ideals of the Enlightenment?

Further Reading

The opening chapters of Eric Hobsbawm’s *The Age of Extremes* (1996) should serve well as a broad yet more detailed account of the Russian Revolution.

A further next step might be Richard Pipes's *Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (1995), perhaps a better place for the ordinary reader to start than his much longer *Russian Revolution* (970 pp.). An accomplished and contrasting left-wing general account is Sheila Fitzpatrick's *The Russian Revolution, 1917–32* (2001).

The essays in Ronald Suny and Arthur Adams, eds., *The Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik Victory* (1990) provide some sense of the complexity of the analyses by modern historians of the revolution.

Prominent among recent scholarly biographies of major Bolshevik leaders, with much new information from Soviet archives, is Robert Service's *Lenin: A Biography* (2000). An acclaimed three-volume, older biography of Trotsky by Isaac Deutscher (himself a former Trotskyite) is probably more information about Trotsky than the general reader will want (*The Prophet Armed* (1954), *The Prophet Unarmed* (1959), and *The Prophet Outcast* (1963)). Nonetheless, it is vividly written and filled with fascinating detail (see also Chapter 23). Nikolai Bukharin has also found an admiring but scholarly biographer in Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (1980).

15 | The Paris Peace Settlement

The Paris Peace Conference, which met from January through June 1919 and included representatives from over thirty nations, faced the Herculean task of establishing order in vast disorder. Called by the “Council of Four” of the victorious powers (President Woodrow Wilson, Premier Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and Prime Minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando), the Conference aspired to redraw much of the map of Europe, setting up liberal-democratic regimes where they had not existed before.

The peace process was formally completed with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, on June 28, 1919, ending the war exactly five years after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. The Treaty spelled out the terms of peace with Germany, although “Versailles” is often used as a shorthand for the entire settlement arranged by the Paris Peace Conference. A series of separate treaties followed that were based on the text of the Versailles Treaty but that applied to other defeated powers.

The Settlements of 1815 and 1919 Compared; the Issue of German Guilt

Historians, looking back generations later, have deemed the Paris Peace Conference a failure; the decisions made by the victors, rather than assuring peace, rendered future wars likely if not inevitable. However, given the seething hatreds of the peoples of Europe at this time, a more enlightened or politically agile set of leaders might well have also failed. The victors, to say nothing of those who lost the war, harbored a range of starkly conflicting goals. However, the French and British did agree on one thing:



Map 15.1 Europe, 1919.

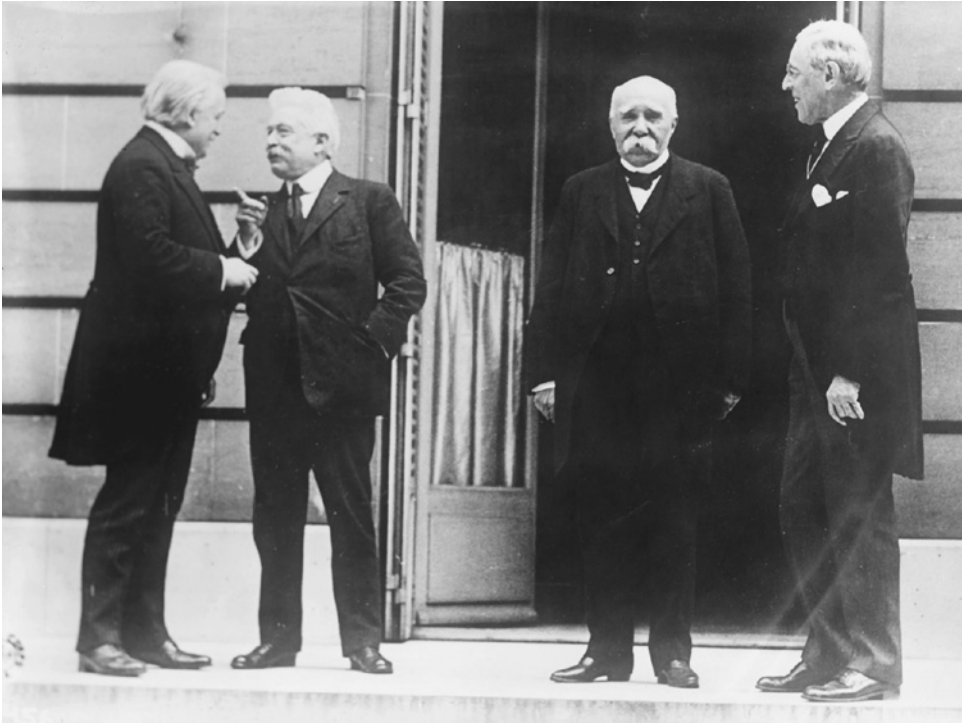


Figure 15.1 The “Big Four” world leaders at the World War I peace conference, Paris, May 27, 1919. From left to right: Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Premier Vittorio Orlando, Premier Georges Clemenceau, and President Woodrow Wilson. *Source:* © GL Archive / Alamy.

Germany was guilty of having started the war and of committing numerous war crimes thereafter. Thus Germany should pay for the war's damages. However, the leaders of many other countries, including the United States, did not accept the charge of unique German guilt, and the Germans of course indignantly rejected it. Such was true even of those many Germans who had been critical of their wartime leadership. They could not accept that all Germans should be held collectively responsible for things done under that leadership.

Moreover, it turned out that Germany's new leaders were being presented with a set of non-negotiable demands in 1919, in violation of the terms of the armistice that Prince Max had signed in November 1918. Those terms were based on Wilsonian principles (outlined below), which the Germans viewed as conciliatory rather than punitive in tone. Since Germany's war-time leaders had been removed from power, many Germans expected that the German people would be treated in a more sympathetic way. Instead, they were being treated as a criminal nation, collectively as guilty as their war-time leaders.

In this, the Paris Peace Conference differed notably from the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15. The delegates to Paris in 1919 had, in the course of the previous fifty-two months, witnessed death and destruction of much more intense and horrific dimensions than the delegates to Vienna. Thus, the vengeful fury directed at the Germans

much exceeded the anger earlier directed at the French. At Vienna in 1815 there had been a desire to punish France and take measures to prevent future French expansion, but, even after Napoleon's escape from Elba, there remained a willingness to accept France as a future player in the concert of nations. At Paris in 1919 the desire to punish Germany envisaged partitioning it and destroying it as a major power; there was relatively little concern among the victorious European powers about the long-range consequences of so deeply alienating Germany's people.

Popular Pressures, "New Diplomacy," Russia's Isolation

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between these two postwar settlements was in the role of "the people" in them. What the common people wanted had been a relatively minor consideration for the leaders of the major powers in 1814–15, but in 1919 the hot breath of popular anger and the dogged activities of various organized pressure groups played a crucial role in the decisions made in this era of "the new diplomacy." (The old diplomacy was one in which the privileged ruling orders made decisions according to their own interests, relatively little concerned about popular opinion.)

In 1814–15, Tsar Alexander I had played a major role in the final settlement at Vienna, declaring "we are all Europeans now," but in 1919 Russia was treated as a pariah nation led by fanatics, and was not even invited to the Paris Conference. The European extended family of rulers, so central to the workings of the Congress of Vienna, was much diminished by 1919. Britain had retained its monarchy, but a republic had been in place in France since the 1870s, and the emperors of Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany had recently fallen. Metternich had been prophetic: Europe had experienced the unleashing of the furies of lower-class resentment, ethnic and nationalistic hatred, the weakening of Christian values, and the destruction of traditional authorities. Metternich had already seen his world overturned by 1848, but in the second half of the century liberal nationalists revealed their own vulnerabilities, above all their inability to form stable or viable nation-states. Many hoped in early 1919 that the failures of liberal nationalism after 1848 could be remedied, and that sovereign democratic nation-states, based on the consent of their peoples, could finally be established throughout central and eastern Europe.

Wilson's Role: The Fourteen Points

For those who harbored such hopes, Woodrow Wilson took on the dimensions of a savior. As president of the world's most powerful democratic nation, it was natural for him to take up the task of spreading liberal democracy. As a practical politician he had demonstrated his ability to mobilize American popular opinion in favor of a declaration of war in April 1917. He needed to justify continuing the war "to make the world safe for democracy." In his State of the Union address in early January 1918, Wilson presented the Fourteen Points, the guidelines according which a just and lasting peace could be established.

A number of the Points looked to the creation of new nation-states, with borders corresponding to what the people within them desired and with a government open to

the scrutiny of the general public. The Points stipulated that Germany evacuate territories it had occupied during the war, and that Alsace-Lorraine be returned to France. However, the vindictive tenor of the Versailles Treaty, in particular the piling of all the blame onto Germany, was absent in the Points. Quite the contrary, there was implicit criticism of the French and British. The final, fourteenth point looked to “a general association of nations” that would establish “mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”

Wilson’s Points were in part formulated as a response to a broader challenge from Bolshevik Russia and the revolutionary left in Europe in regard to the meaning of “democracy” (whether it was to be liberal-constitutionalist, as in the United States, or socialist-Communist, as in Soviet Russia). The opening shots of the Cold War could be sensed already in Lenin’s and Wilson’s contrasting declarations of December 1917 and January 1918. The question “Wilson or Lenin?” was taken up in countless editorials, speeches, pamphlets, and political gatherings. In most of Europe the answer to that question was emphatically “Wilson!” In his tour of Europe before arriving in Paris in January 1919, the American president was greeted by throngs of adoring crowds.

Within less than a year, however, his popularity had plummeted. The reasons for that striking change were many, but among the most obvious was that his Fourteen Points, while proposing measures that elicited broad popular support, also included facile and/or vaguely worded remedies to problems that were, to put it mildly, not easily remedied. Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando were dead-set against a number of the Points, and their state of mind was not improved by the fact that Wilson had failed to consult them before making his Points public. In the treaties that finally emerged from the Paris Peace Conference, the Points faded into the background. Some were significantly amended or qualified; others were simply ignored.

The British were particularly alarmed about Point Two, which called for freedom of the seas in times of both peace and war. (The British blockade, it will be recalled, had been the source of severe tension between the Americans and the British before 1917.) Point One implicitly directed an accusing finger not only at the Central Powers but also at the Entente, by stipulating that diplomatic agreements “shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.” Point Six was implicitly critical of British and French imperialism in requiring that, in the postwar colonial settlements, the desires of the native populations “must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.”

The Successor States and the Issue of Self-Determination

A particularly tangled set of issues arose in deciding on the boundaries of the successor nation-states. As in 1814–15, Poland presented a major problem. The collapse of the three powers that had partitioned Poland at the end of the eighteenth century opened up unparalleled opportunities for a reunited Polish state. Wilson’s Point Thirteen stipulated that “an independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations.” But Point Thirteen also stipulated that Poland “should be assured a free and secure access to the sea.” Doing so without incorporating large numbers of non-Poles into the new Polish state was impossible.

Similarly, areas of “indisputably Polish populations” were difficult to distinguish, especially in the many border areas where Poles mixed with other populations.

In Poland, as in many other areas of central and eastern Europe, trying to establish universally acceptable borders around coherent, homogeneous, and viable nation-states revealed itself to be a fool's errand. Similarly, those drawing up the treaties at the Paris Peace Conference had to face realities on the ground concerning which they had little leverage. The borders of the new Polish state remained violently contested in almost every direction, with many local battles raging while the Peace Conference deliberated in 1919; a major war between Poland and Soviet Russia continued for much of 1920. Dramatic and initially successful attacks and counterattacks by the two nations, back and forth, finally resulted in a peace treaty in March 1921 that satisfied neither side but established an uneasy Russo-Polish border that lasted until 1939. Even that border included large territories with non-Polish majorities, mostly Ukrainian and Byelorussian.

On the northwest of the new Polish state, the Paris Peace Conference finally agreed to what became known as the Polish Corridor, which cut starkly through formerly German territory in order to assure Polish access to the sea, leaving East Prussia separated from the rest of Germany and creating a free city under the supervision of the League of Nations, in the formerly German port-city of Danzig. Large numbers of Germans living in the area of the Polish Corridor subsequently moved out when presented with demands that they accept Polish citizenship.

The Creation of New Nation-States: Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia

The issue of the Polish Corridor touched on the larger one of how to reconcile the principle of national self-determination with the principle of providing natural, defensible frontiers. A related consideration was establishing borders that would allow the new states to prosper economically. The borders of Czechoslovakia, the newly created state to Poland's south, epitomized the dilemmas of state creation even more than was the case with Poland. Although the name created for this new state implied a unification of two related peoples, the Czechs and the Slovaks, each speaking related Western-Slavic tongues, Czechoslovakia also contained around 3 million German-speakers, often referred to as Sudeten Germans (after one of the mountain chains along the western border, where Germans were especially numerous). In addition, there were sizeable pockets of German settlements throughout the new state.

The Sudeten Germans had previously been concentrated in the Austrian provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, and thus never part of Bismarck's German Reich, but by early 1919 many of those Germans did not relish becoming a minority population within the new Czechoslovak nation-state. If the principle of national self-determination were to hold consistently, the majority German-speaking areas along the western border with Germany should have been given the option of being included in the newly established German republic. But the Czech leaders insisted on retaining the long-established Sudeten border areas, in part because they were economically productive but also because the mountains along the German border formed a natural frontier, of possible military significance in the future. Czechoslovakia's shape was thus peculiar,

stretching from central Germany (well west of Berlin) to eastern Europe (well east of Warsaw). The new state also included large numbers of Ukrainians at its far eastern tip (prewar Ruthenia), as well as Poles on the northeast, Magyars on the southeast, and Jews in most urban areas and in the eastern tip.

It was awkward that this new nation-state, of the Czechs and Slovaks, resembled the prewar multinational states. Of Czechoslovakia's total population of 13.5 million, non-Czechoslovak minorities constituted something like 45 percent. Furthermore, the notion of a single Czechoslovak nationality was transparently artificial. The Slovaks, a mostly peasant people, had long been ruled by Hungary; the Czechs, far more urban and economically advanced, had long been part of Austria, and in truth the two peoples had scant affection for one another. The notion of a unified Czechoslovak people was established in the constitution of the new state in part because the Czechs alone did not constitute a majority. The large percentage of Germans (20–25 percent of the total) was all the more awkward in that German-speakers were generally more educated and economically more advanced than the Czechs. The German minority would remain restive, loudly complaining of discriminatory treatment by the Czechs, throughout the interwar years.

Yugoslavia was yet another new nation-state that, while in some sense based on Wilsonian principles, was an artificial combination of peoples who had some linguistic affinities but little common historical experience and even less mutual affection. The new state was at first named the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, taking up the name Yugoslavia only in 1929. The Serbs dominated (or aspired to dominate) this new state, generating resistance and resentment from non-Serbs, especially the Croats, who thought of themselves as culturally more advanced. As we have seen, the origins of World War I had much to do with the issue of South-Slav nationalism, but before the war the borders and political nature of any future South-Slav state were uncertain. Violent disagreements with neighboring states arose over where borders were to be drawn.

The Serbo-Croatian language formed a weak foundation for Yugoslav unity. The Serbs used the Cyrillic alphabet, the Croats the Latin; the Serbs were Greek Orthodox in religion, the Croats Roman Catholic. The Slovenes, whose South-Slavic language differed in many regards from Serbo-Croatian, had been part of the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the Croats had been part of the Hungarian half. Similar differences characterized the populations of much of the rest of this new state. Many of its citizens had, within living memory, been part of the Ottoman Empire, with a remarkable *mélange* of ethnic identity, languages, and religions (including Islam) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Dilemmas and Contradictions of Ethnic-Linguistic States

Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia were made up, in whole or in part, of former provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The new borders of the two remnant states, Austria and Hungary, now republics, did enclose ethnically and linguistically homogeneous German and Magyar peoples, but in their cases, too, applying Wilsonian principles and also creating viable states proved impossible. Both Austria and Hungary were now landlocked, with poor economic prospects. Having lost their leading role in the

empire, many Austrian Germans saw a brighter future with the new German republic. Before 1914 the Pan-German movement in the Habsburg Empire had unsuccessfully agitated for an *Anschluss*, or union, with the Bismarckian Reich. But the victor nations at Paris were not about to allow such a union, which would have resulted in a new German state larger than the German Reich of 1914.

The Paris Peace Conference sponsored plebiscites in border areas of mixed population in an effort to establish borders consistent with what the majority of the people within them wanted, but yet again that principle often proved unworkable in practice. The French rejected out-of-hand the notion that the Alsatians, who spoke a German dialect and had been part of the German Reich for two generations, should now be given the option of voting on whether they would rejoin France. Many actually might have preferred Germany, especially if its destiny had not seemed under such a cloud in 1919. The issue was moot, however, since Wilson's Point Eight declared, "The wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine ... should be righted."

The Magyar-speaking peoples of the new Hungarian state nurtured an even larger sense of grievance than the Germans about the double standard applied to them in regard to national self-determination. The Hungarian state was now approximately one-third the size it had been in 1914, cut down to around 8 million inhabitants; it lost hundreds of thousands of Magyar-speakers along its borders with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia but also to Romania (a much larger number – c. 3 million), in an extensive Magyar-speaking pocket of the former Hungarian province of Transylvania.

The dire fate of Hungary had to do not only with its having been on the losing side in World War I but also with its having been invaded, at the war's end, by Romania and then being ruled by a Soviet republic between March and August 1919. When anti-Communist forces retook Budapest in early August, a chaotic and bloody "white terror" reigned in Hungary, deemed by conservative forces a fitting response to the red terror that had prevailed in the previous months. The white terror hit Jews with particular ferocity, in part because the Communist leaders of the Hungarian Soviet regime had been almost entirely of Jewish origin. From being one of the countries most open to Jewish assimilation between 1867 and 1914, Hungary became notorious for its anti-semitism in the interwar years.

Minority Treaties

The danger that national and religious minorities, by no means only Jews, in the newly created nation-states might be treated unjustly was taken seriously by those in charge of the Paris Peace Conference. Efforts were therefore made to formulate treaties, tacked on to the treaties establishing the new nations, that would safeguard minority rights in the constitutions of the new states. However, attempts to define those rights ran into nearly insurmountable obstacles, most of all because the leaders of the new nation-states resented the minority treaties as an unfair limitation of their national sovereignty and an affront to their dignity.

They had a point, since the Americans, British, and French would not have consented to similar treaties in regard to their own minorities. This double standard was openly justified by reference to the backward nature of the populations in the new nation-states – serving further to inflame the resentments of the leaders of these new nations. That Britain,

France, and the United States had a less than sterling record in regard to the treatment of their own minorities (blacks, Chinese, Irish, Italians, Jews) was not a point that the leaders of those countries were willing to consider relevant to issues in the 1919 treaties.

The minority treaties in question were remarkably far-reaching. They went beyond the protection of civil equality in that they recognized national minorities as independent, corporate bodies, having the right to use their own languages in official relations with the state. Similarly, they were granted the right to establish separate primary schools, also in their own languages and favoring their own religions, but financially supported by the state. Such extensive corporate minority rights had not historically been recognized by the Americans, British, or French in their own countries. Quite the contrary: they had forcefully insisted that their minority populations conform to national ideals, particularly in attending primary schools in their respective majority languages.

For Jews in the new nation-states, who felt especially vulnerable, the minority treaties took on great importance. Jewish delegations from Britain, France, and the United States collaborated to get the treaties approved, often themselves composing significant portions of the finally accepted texts, while making it quite clear that they did not support the notion of comparable measures to be introduced in their own countries. Not surprisingly, antisemitic observers cited these activities as yet further proof that the Jews of all countries felt bound to one another, cooperating behind the scenes, using money and connections in high places to forward their interests, often in stark opposition to the interests of non-Jews.

League of Nations Mandates

The minority treaties had a parallel in the notion of establishing “mandates” that authorized League of Nations member nations to rule over the non-European areas previously ruled by the Ottoman Empire and Germany. With both the minority treaties and the mandates, the assertion of western-European cultural and political superiority was explicit. The principle of national self-determination, difficult enough for many areas in Europe, seemed to the leaders of the Paris Peace Conference to be utterly unrealistic for non-European areas. The populations of those areas were “not yet able to stand by themselves, under the strenuous conditions of the modern world,” as was stated in the document establishing the mandates. These populations needed a period of tutelage, or benevolent European rule, to prepare them for self-government at some future time.

French and British interests in the Middle East clashed, and contradictory policies had been pursued during the war, especially in regard to relations with the Arab populations previously ruled by the Ottoman Empire. An effort to resolve those contradictory policies took the form of what were termed “Class A Mandates” of the League: Syria was taken over by France, and Britain assumed control of Palestine, as well as the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (at that time called Mesopotamia, from the Greek for “land between the rivers”). Palestine was initially understood to include extensive territories east of the Jordan River (then called Transjordan), but in September 1922 Britain separated Transjordan from Palestine. The separation was accompanied by the stipulation that provisions dealing with Jewish settlement in Palestine, based on the Balfour Declaration, did not apply to Transjordan. Zionist leaders protested energetically for many years but in vain.

In 1932, the area of the British Mesopotamian Mandate was the first to be recognized as an independent country, as a monarchy renamed Iraq, though the British retained military bases in it. The French mandate over Syria lasted until 1943, when two independent countries, Syria and Lebanon, were established from it. Transjordan became an independent country in 1946. The future of the British Palestinian Mandate posed unusually nettlesome problems, since it contained areas sacred to Christians ("the Holy Land") as well as to Muslims. But Palestine had been designated in the Balfour Declaration as the site of a national homeland for the Jews, for whom the area was also sacred. That designation was then integrated into the document issued by the League of Nations that established the Palestinian mandate under British rule.

Those many observers who had expressed reservations about the wisdom of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 retained their doubts about the wisdom of attempting to settle large numbers of Europe's Jews in Palestine. The vague language of the Declaration began to loom large, particularly in the words "nothing should be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish populations in Palestine." Moving millions of Jews into the area, particularly if an eventual Jewish nation-state was to be created for them, no doubt threatened to prejudice the rights of the existing Arab majority in major ways. Critics also doubted that Palestine, believed to be largely barren and unproductive, could support the masses of oppressed and poverty-stricken eastern-European Jews who might eventually migrate to it.

Those who had predicted that a British-sponsored Jewish homeland in Palestine would soon turn into a heavy burden saw their predictions confirmed. Even initial supporters of the Declaration, such as Winston Churchill, expressed growing reservations: "The Palestinian venture is ... one which certainly will never yield any profit of a material kind [The Jews] take it for granted that the local population will be cleared out to suit their convenience." Lord Balfour stoked Arab outrage by stating that "Zionism, right or wrong ... is rooted in age-long traditions, present needs, and future hopes of far profounder import than the desires of 700,000 Arabs."

Other solutions to a worsening Jewish Question seemed no more promising, a rather crucial point. Just how the Palestinian mandate might develop after 1919 was anyone's guess, but its short-term prospects were widely viewed with skepticism. The model of Palestine's being turned into a sovereign state within a short period, as offered by Iraq, would have meant a Palestine that was simply another Arab-majority country, but with a substantial, presumably growing Jewish minority. (Jews in Palestine were about one-tenth as numerous as Arabs by the early 1920s.) The notion of an Arab-majority Palestinian state in the foreseeable future was opposed with special vehemence by the Zionists themselves. Their plan was to postpone the creation of a Jewish state until adequate numbers of Jews had moved to Palestine to constitute a decisive majority, something that all agreed was likely to be a long-term project – and one that the Arabs of the area were not likely to welcome, to put it mildly.

The future of the Palestinian mandate thus remained in limbo, and Jewish migration to it in the 1920s was slow and uncertain. Jewish emigrants often arrived and then left within a short time, mostly because of the difficulty of making a living there. Emigrants were also shocked by the hostility of the Arab majority. Many European Jews might have preferred the United States, but doors to it largely closed in the mid-1920s. Soviet Russia, with its many Jewish leaders and strict laws against antisemitism, offered its own solution to the Jewish Question, but only a few idealists moved there; it was too obviously a

poor country of uncertain prospects. In the new German Weimar Republic, native-born Jews prospered economically, and many rose to prominent political and cultural roles in the 1920s, but migration to it was limited, even before the Nazis took over. Jews in other countries with significant Jewish populations, such as Poland and Romania, found that the effectiveness of the minority clauses remained problematic. Many if not most Jews in those two countries would have been happy to emigrate, but they had few real options.

Whatever the pros and cons of various solutions to the Jewish Question, most observers did not consider it to be anywhere close to resolution in the 1920s. The situation in the 1930s saw a radical worsening of conditions for most of Europe's Jews, giving the Palestinian mandate renewed allures, at least for relatively affluent German Jews after the Nazi takeover, but, for the great mass of Europe's Jewish population, Palestine was not a realistic option.

Further Reading

Among the best overall accounts of the Paris Peace Conference is Margaret McMillan's *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (2003).

The tangled issue of the minority treaties is taken up with much fascinating new material in Carole Fink's *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (2006), but it is designed for readers already familiar with the topic (450 pp.).

Covering a wider area than Jonathan Schneer's *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (2012) is David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (2009).

John Milton Cooper's *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (2011) is a definitive scholarly account (736 pp.) of an elusive character – not of course a European but someone who nonetheless had a profound impact on European and world history.

16 The Dilemmas of Liberal Democracy in the 1920s

By the end of the nineteenth century, the strengths of free-market economies and European liberal democracy were undeniable, but their weaknesses and dilemmas were also becoming increasingly apparent. That France and Britain, decisively joined by the United States in 1917, prevailed in World War I, whereas the authoritarian regimes all collapsed, seemed an obvious confirmation of the superiority of free institutions. However, the victory of liberal democracy at war's end was hardly unqualified or unquestioned; France and Britain emerged militarily victorious but weakened economically and politically.

The mid-to-late 1920s were years of economic recovery, or at least so it seemed, but the damages done to economic institutions by the war and the general disarray of international economic relations were not easily repaired. American losses in the war were incomparably less damaging to the country, but the United States after 1919 proved unready to assume the heavy responsibilities of world leadership. The stock-market crash in the United States in late 1929 set into motion ultimately calamitous developments in Europe's rickety economies.

Failure to make a lasting peace may rank as the most fundamental failure of the 1920s, but the inability to put Europe's economy on a sound basis may also be seen as crucial. The causes of the Great Depression were many, but they were closely linked to the huge damages of over four years of war and the inability of both the Europeans and Americans to address economic issues in a more enlightened, far-seeing way, once the war had ended.

In a yet deeper sense, these failures had to do with what previous chapters have termed Europe's reckless dynamism. In both diplomatic relations and in economic decisions, a tendency toward chaos lurked below the surface. The chaos that came was not exactly what the Marxists said it would be, but the self-regulating capacities

of the free market, which the more doctrinaire defenders of capitalism continued to insist would soon kick in, were so slow in coming that millions of Europeans living under capitalism lost faith in them. By 1932, many of those millions were ready for desperate measures, economic and otherwise.

Containing Germany: The Weakness of the League of Nations, 1919–29

Just as containing France had been a major concern of the Congress of Vienna, containing Germany was a major concern of the Paris Peace Conference. The determination to make Germany pay for the damages of the war was paralleled by a determination, especially strong among France's leaders, to keep Germany weak in the future. The initial inclination of some French leaders, especially in the military, was to separate the Rhineland from the German Reich. The Rhineland was a heavily Catholic area, one historically under French cultural influence and even fully incorporated into the French state during the Napoleonic period. There was some support in the Rhineland itself for the idea of separation from Germany, especially among those industrialists who feared what the Social Democrats, in power in Berlin, might do in favoring working-class interests. Others hoped that a severance from Protestant-Prussian Germany might result in a more lenient treatment for the Rhineland in the peace settlement. However, it soon became apparent that a heavy majority of the population in the area was opposed to becoming another separate Catholic-German nation, alongside Austria.

The final compromise was to make the Rhineland into a demilitarized zone, including all German territory west of the Rhine as well as a fifty-kilometer stretch along the river's eastern bank. German military installations were forbidden there in perpetuity, and Allied forces were to remain in German territory west of the Rhine for the next fifteen years. A number of other measures designed to keep Germany weak militarily were incorporated into the Versailles Treaty. The country's army was to be limited to 100,000, adequate to maintain internal order but not to stage aggressive war. The naval fleet was to be radically reduced, and the country was forbidden to build – or even to retain already built – submarines, tanks, and military aircraft.

These measures were all deeply resented by Germany's population, but the issue of reparations became the most contentious, especially with its link to the charge of unique war guilt. The notion that Germany should pay for the damages of war had ample precedents. France had been obliged to pay reparations in 1871, and it did so ahead of schedule. However, the damages done in World War I far exceeded those of the Franco-Prussian War. It took quite some time to come up with a final figure (and German negotiators were obliged to accept whatever it would be, without setting any limit), but at 132 billion gold marks (c. 33 billion American dollars) it represented roughly twice Germany's national wealth in 1914. Yearly payments were envisaged into the distant future.

Some have argued that, had Germans accepted their obligations in the spirit of the French after 1871, the reparations could have been paid. But, even if that assertion is accepted, the Germans did not see things that way, since they did not accept unique guilt for starting the war. In more practical terms, to require one country to pay for all

damages was unworkable economically; Germany could not be both weakened and expected to be prodigiously productive. The 1920s would see on-going conflicts over reparations, which ultimately were never paid at anything like the rate the French had envisaged.

The Dilemmas of American Leadership: Isolationism

The Americans did not participate in the deliberation over reparations and generally were less filled with a vengeful spirit in regard to Germany, but of course they had suffered no damage to their homeland, and their losses at the front were relatively small. Wilson's hope throughout was that the imperfections of the peace settlement, the various compromises he had been forced to make – even the injustices and irrationalities of reparations – could later be remedied by the League of Nations. The League was perhaps the grandest vision of those included in his Fourteen Points, but it was also the one that brought up the most doubts as to its feasibility. Europe's nations were still too committed to their absolute sovereignty, as indeed were the Americans, and too suspicious of one another to be able to entertain seriously an international organization with enough power to prevent war. The notion of international reconciliation remained weak in comparison to the stubborn determination to punish Germany.

It is tempting to conclude that by the time of the armistice, if not before, the writing was on the wall for Wilson's dream of "a general association of nations." In the mid-term elections of November 1918, Wilson lost control of both houses of the American legislature to the Republican Party, whose leaders remained hostile to "entangling alliances." In that regard they were undoubtedly more representative of the general American population than Wilson was. A year later, the Senate pulled the rug from under Wilson by refusing to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Undoubtedly, Wilson's political inflexibility, in particular his unwillingness to compromise with Senate leaders, played a role in the eventual negative vote, but it must be questioned whether Americans in 1919 and 1920 were anywhere near ready to take up the heavy burdens of world leadership, especially to assume the kind of assertive role that would have been necessary to smooth over or repair the many dubious premises and unworkable compromises of the Paris Peace Conference.

The xenophobic wave in the United States in 1919 merged with hard-core isolationism under the Republican presidencies of Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. These trends reflected deep-seated American traditions. It would have taken more than the efforts of one man, even one more flexible and knowledgeable than Woodrow Wilson, to have effectively reversed the profound aversion in the United States to getting permanently immersed in Europe's troubles. Interestingly, where the United States did play a more active role abroad before 1945, in Latin America, it was not in the direction of supporting Wilsonian principles but rather in accommodating dictatorships. At any rate, the United States was not powerful enough – nor would it ever become powerful enough – to reverse profoundly antidemocratic political traditions in other countries. At most it could give encouragement to one faction or another, according to what was perceived as feasible – and what appeared to be in American interests. American

presidents could not realistically aspire to transform deeply engrained political patterns in their own country, let alone abroad, even in areas that had been demolished by war (a point that emerged with even greater clarity during the Cold War).

Reactionary Trends and the Woman Question

In Europe as in America in the immediate postwar period, the high hopes for social revolution by the extreme left, and hopes for the full implementation of the liberal ideals of 1848 for the moderate left, were countered by reactionary trends, right-wing political victories, and xenophobia. For the Woman Question, as so many of the other lingering nineteenth-century questions, the news was both good and bad. There was a slowly growing consensus regarding the desirability of women gaining the vote, at least in the more advanced industrial nations. However, there remained substantial differences of opinion, among women themselves as well as among men, about what should be done with that vote, or what an appropriate adjustment of gender roles might involve, once formal civil equality had been achieved. In most countries, doctrinaire feminists calling for major shifts in sex roles remained a tiny minority, coming largely from economically privileged and educated backgrounds. Women were no more in agreement about what was to be done about the Woman Question than industrial workers were about the Social Question or Jews about the Jewish Question.

Political developments in Germany in the 1920s were especially paradoxical: Secular leftists (primarily democratic socialists and left-liberals) had long been the strongest supporters of giving the vote to women, but, once female suffrage was incorporated in the 1919 constitution, German women voted in larger numbers than men did for the Catholic Center Party, for political moderates, and for traditional authority figures. The German political left would almost certainly have been stronger throughout the 1920s if granting the vote to women had been postponed for a decade or so.

It is revealing that the Spanish dictator, Miguel Primo de Rivera, favored giving women in Spain the vote in the new constitution being considered in the late 1920s because he believed them less attracted to secular, left-wing causes. At least as far as Spanish women were concerned, he was almost certainly correct in that belief. After World War II, support from conservative leaders for female suffrage was based on similar conclusions.

The experience of women in the interwar years in Soviet Russia was also paradoxical. Gaining the vote meant relatively little in a Communist dictatorship, one almost entirely in the hands of men. However, the country's several interwar constitutions did include clauses that extended women's rights and protections far beyond anything in the constitutions of western Europe. Similarly, women joined the Soviet workforce in unprecedented numbers, and in principle all avenues of employment were opened to them.

But there was a catch: In practice, Soviet women found themselves still almost entirely responsible for traditional domestic chores, such as cooking, child-rearing, and house-keeping. This experience of being formally liberated but at the same time feeling unfairly burdened by domestic responsibilities would later become a much-discussed issue in all industrially advanced non-Communist countries. It should be added, however, that issues of sex roles were hardly the primary concern to Russian women in these years; Soviet citizens, female and male, had much more pressing worries, among them mass

starvation, ruthless collectivization of agriculture, and arrests for alleged political subversion. These calamities and heartbreaks touched nearly every extended family.

The belief of such nineteenth-century liberal thinkers as John Stuart Mill that giving the vote to women would result in a world less characterized by aggressive attitudes, while plausible, revealed itself to be overly optimistic. At any rate, the struggle to gain the vote was only partially won by the end of the war. In the Netherlands women gained the vote in 1917 and in Britain they gained it in 1918 (for women over thirty), but in France women had to wait until 1944, in Italy until 1946, and in Switzerland until 1971. In most areas of Scandinavia, women's suffrage had been attained in the immediate prewar period, but in southern and eastern Europe it was much slower to be accepted. In Spain it came formally with the constitution of the Second Republic in 1931, but that turned out to have little meaning, since civil war and the victory of Franco's right-wing forces soon followed, and no elections were held for many years.

Women's suffrage societies sent delegates to Paris in early 1919 with hopes that the Peace Conference would take a stand favorable to women's issues. They succeeded in arranging a meeting with President Wilson, who spoke favorably to them about establishing a commission of the Conference to deal with women's franchise. But he subsequently found only tepid support for the project among other leaders at the Conference. Lord Balfour affirmed that he was in favor of giving women the vote, but he agreed with other leaders that the issue should be left to individual countries. Wilson let the matter drop in Paris; it was being considered by the US Congress at this time, and American women gained the vote in 1920.

By 1919–20 there was an unmistakable shift from prewar antifeminist attitudes toward acceptance of a more active participation of women in the public life of modern nations. It was nonetheless a cautious, limited consensus; broad acceptance of women as political leaders was still far in the future, and very few women gained any kind of major elected office in the interwar years. Similarly, although traditional beliefs about sex roles were definitely challenged by the experiences of war, most European males were utterly unprepared to assume equal responsibility in the domestic sphere, and few women at this point were seriously asking for such a change.

The urgent demands of total war had pulled millions of women into defense industries, often into arenas of physically demanding employment that had previously been considered appropriate only to men or that simply had been vacated by men going to the front and urgently needed to be filled. Changing back from war to peace production is always fraught with dislocations, but in late 1918 and early 1919 men returning from the front often discovered that the jobs they sought or had hoped to return to were filled by women. In Italy, there were reports of returning soldiers angrily chanting misogynist slogans and accusing women of being responsible for the widespread unemployment in the country. Comparable scenes occurred in other countries, although many women were content to return to more traditional positions. However, this certainly did not apply to all women – and often for concrete reasons: Many had become widows and had to face the prospect of being the primary breadwinners for their children and other dependents. Millions of unmarried women similarly had to recognize, given the millions of men killed at the front, that they stood greatly reduced chances of finding a mate. Self-reliant women, capable of fending for themselves, doing anything men could do – such were feminist ideals. But this was a cruelly tragic route by which to achieve them.

Since so many millions of men had perished and so many others returned from the front as invalids, women in 1919 constituted a notably larger proportion of potential voters and able-bodied workers than before the war. There was in short a bleakly practical aspect to their claims to be considered fully equal under the law and in the workplace. Moreover, women, too, had unquestionably suffered for the fatherland. They had endured years of harsh working conditions and rationed food; they had lost husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers. Suffering for the fatherland was considered noble, and special compensation for it only natural, but exactly how to reward women was unclear. The severity of their sufferings, compared to those of the men who had served at the front, was palpably less. Earlier histories of Europe have been criticized for neglecting women's sacrifices and their sufferings in the war years, and justifiably so, but many men had suffered immeasurably more. For such reasons, quite aside from their entrenched sexist attitudes, many men had difficulty in mentally processing the changes and accepting women's claims for compensation and recognition.

It is a commonplace that war is revolutionary, and also that revolutionary goals are often achieved at a terrible, even self-defeating price. The repercussions of this revolutionary war continued long after the formal treaties were signed. The antifeminism that characterized Fascism and Nazism was more an aspect of the reactionary agenda of those ideologies than a major force driving them, but, just as the modern rise of the Jews made many non-Jews feel threatened, the changing roles of women in these years threatened many men. Modern Jews and modern women, similarly, were often blamed for the ills of modern times. It is revealing that the initial program of Italian Fascism in 1919 favored giving the vote to women, but that clause was soon discarded as being unacceptable to most of those whom the Fascist movement hoped to attract.

The Negative Impact of the Versailles Treaty: Undermining German Democracy

For many Europeans, especially those of the democratic left, the failure of the United States to provide leadership after 1919 was seen as a betrayal and an important factor in the failure of the European democratic left in the following two decades. That charge made the most sense in the German case, where the left in particular had so ardently believed in Wilson and was so deeply shocked by the Versailles Treaty, but the charge had some plausibility also for the many disappointments experienced by France and Britain in these years.

Blaming the United States also had some substance insofar as the Americans could be held responsible for the stock-market collapse in November 1929 and the ensuing depression (discussed below). But, whatever the validity of the finger-pointing, the story of the European interwar democracies and the relations between European states was unquestionably one of major disappointment if not abject failure. Nonetheless, the long-range determinants of European history played a role that is impossible to ignore. Liberal democracy survived in areas with previously functioning parliamentary democracies, notably in Britain, France, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries. Prewar parliamentary regimes had been troubled in Germany, Italy, and Spain; Fascism and Nazism came to power in the first two in 1922 and 1933 respectively, whereas in Spain

a military dictatorship ruled for most of the 1920s, followed by Franco's victory in Spain's civil war by 1938. In those areas where the population had scant prewar experience of liberal democracy, authoritarian regimes soon replaced the liberal-democratic states established immediately after the war. (Czechoslovakia was something of an exception; it spanned western, central, and eastern Europe and remained a parliamentary democracy until 1938, but even there it was in the western areas of the country that democratic practices were most evident.)

If the intent of the great powers at Paris had been to undermine liberal-democratic rule in Germany, they could hardly have done it more effectively than by imposing the Versailles Treaty on the young German republic. The effort to spread Communist revolution from Russia to Germany in 1918 and 1919 failed, but efforts from both Communists and right-wing generals to take power continued in 1920 and 1921. In early 1923, run-away inflation, driven by France's occupation of the industrial Ruhr district (initiated to force Germany to pay reparations), brought the Weimar Republic yet again to the edge of collapse, with another round of attempts by the forces of the extreme right and left to seize power.

It is impossible to say how a postwar liberal-democratic Germany, without the crippling burdens of the Versailles Treaty and runaway inflation, might have developed, but the lack of deeply rooted liberal values in Germany's population, as well as the survival of many authoritarian institutions, played a major role in the history of the republic. As we have seen, the war overwhelmed the left; with its outbreak, the SPD, the strongest force on the left, abandoned its pre-1914 role as political pariah and embraced the so-called *Burgfriede* (civil peace of Germany's parties) in the name of national defense. Thereafter the SPD worked out a cooperative relationship with Germany's ruling military in organizing the war effort.

In late 1918, the SPD leader, Friedrich Ebert, accepted aid from the military for protection against the revolutionary left. The secret pact he made, later known as the Ebert–Groener Agreement (Groener was the leading general) entailed a commitment by Ebert not to meddle with the established privileges and independence of the military. Thus, while the soon-to-be-accepted constitution of the Weimar Republic was a model liberal-democratic document, some of the underlying realities of postwar Germany reflected a continuation of the German-Prussian tradition, as well as the survival of the economic structure in Germany, in particular the key role of big business.

The Evolution of Liberal Democracy in Germany

There were, though, a number of factors that initially seemed promising for liberal democracy in postwar Germany, above all the deep discredit of the monarchical old regime in losing the war. Unlike the socialist left and religious center in Italy (where the Fascists came to power in the political stalemate of 1922), the SPD and the Center Party cooperated politically in the immediate postwar period. The elections of January 1919 for the constituent assembly resulted in a decisive victory for what came to be termed the Weimar Coalition, composed of the SPD, the Center Party (Germany's two largest parties), and the smaller left-liberal Democratic Party; the popular vote for the three parties represented approximately two-thirds of the total. In February 1919, SPD leader

Ebert was chosen to be the first president of the republic. The parties of the Weimar Coalition were then able to oversee the writing of the new constitution, formally adopted in August 1919.

However, this majority support of Germany's voting public for the Coalition proved ephemeral, and in the elections of early 1920 it won only about 40 percent of the vote. For the remaining years of the republic, until the Nazi takeover in late January 1933, ruling coalitions included parties further to the right, and they were often half-hearted supporters of the republic. One of the many ironies in that regard was that Gustav Stresemann, leader of the center-right German People's Party, came to be regarded as the savior of the republic. That reputation was based on his roles as chancellor in 1923, "the year of crisis," and then as foreign minister in eight succeeding cabinets. He headed what was called a "wide" Weimar coalition (that is, of four major parties), which crushed the revolts by the Communists and Nazis in 1923 and helped to get the economy back on its feet. He thereafter worked steadily for international understanding, altering Germany's previous policy of passive resistance to the terms of the Versailles Treaty to one of "fulfillment," which entailed renegotiating the treaty in more realistic directions. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, along with the French leader, Aristide Briand, in 1926.

Stresemann's party was considered the party of business and of those who clung to a vision of Germany as a *Weltmacht* (world power). Stresemann had earlier been expelled from the left-center Democratic Party as too right-wing, and his initial reaction to the formation of the Weimar Republic had been distinctly negative. But he, like many other Germans, came to regard the republic as a lesser evil – the greater evil being the racist right wing (he had a Jewish wife), including the Nazis and the antirepublican reactionary nationalists. His sudden death of a stroke, at age fifty-one, in October 1929, on the eve of the Great Depression, took on a retrospective symbolism. Germany had suddenly lost its most effective statesman. But he had been worn down over the years: Shortly before his death, he remarked to a British diplomat that "We have now lost German youth [to the Nazis and Communists], which could have been won for peace and reconstruction. That is my tragedy – and the Allies' crime."

Another "wide" coalition cabinet had taken over in 1928, headed by the Social Democrat Hermann Müller, but it was not capable of effectively addressing the economic crisis of late 1929, nor were other combinations of parties and new chancellors. In fact, parliamentary government in Germany had ceased to function by the spring of 1930. It was replaced by presidential rule, under Article 48 of the constitution, which allowed for such rule in emergencies. The ominous next step, in early 1933, was in the direction of inviting the Nazis to lead a coalition, as described in Chapter 18.

Developments in the Third Republic

The fortunes of the French Third Republic in the 1920s and 1930s also had much to do with long-standing political traditions. France had been a republic with universal male suffrage since the mid-1870s, but the country's antirepublican right remained a constant threat. With the outbreak of war, French socialists (the SFIO) rallied to what was termed the "Sacred Union" of all parties in defense of the fatherland, but that patriotic

record did little to protect the SFIO from the right-wing resurgence of the immediate postwar period. In the parliamentary elections of October 1919, the National Bloc, a broad coalition of right and center parties, trounced the SFIO. The party's fortunes further sank in December 1920, when it split, with the pro-Communist faction winning the support of the majority of the party.

The National Bloc was responsible for the confrontational policies of France in regard to Germany after the Peace Conference. But the growing popular revulsion in France from the excesses of the National Bloc from 1919 to 1924 contributed to the victory in the elections of May 1924 of the *Cartel des gauches* (alliance of leftists), based primarily on the SFIO and the Radical Party, the latter being the main party of the center-left and the dominant party of the Third Republic in the interwar years. By the 1920s the French term *radical* no longer implied "extremist." Rather, it indicated an attachment to the French Jacobin tradition of "radical" but non-socialist democracy. In fact, the main tenets of Jacobinism had been achieved by the turn of the century (universal manhood suffrage, separation of Church and state, free secondary education). Where the Radical Party and the SFIO differed by the mid-1920s had to do with issues of property rights and state action. The small producer remained sacred to the Radicals, and they resisted having the state intervene actively in the economy, above all in using the state's taxing power to achieve social equality.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century there had been doctrinal overlaps and movement of individual members between the left wing of the Radical Party and the right wing of the SFIO. With the SFIO's loss of its left wing to the Communists in December 1920, the party was freer to pursue a parliamentary, gradualist path to socialism. However, its leaders were still not ready to disown the party's Marxist origins or abandon the familiar rhetoric of revolution. Thus, while agreeing to join an electoral alliance with the Radical Party in May 1924, the SFIO's leaders refused to accept any cabinet posts in what they still considered a "bourgeois" government. A coalition of Socialists and Radicals to preserve the republic was acceptable, but "real" or fundamental change, involving the socialization of the means of production, could not be expected of such a coalition.

A left-wing parliamentary coalition in France had important foreign-policy implications, especially since there were changes afoot in Britain as well. In January 1924, a government headed by the Labour Party had taken over. This government proclaimed a conciliatory foreign policy, further opening options for France's left to try a different path in what came to be called "the years of international conciliation," in contrast to the previous "years of coercion," thus also opening options for Stresemann. Germany was admitted into the League of Nations in 1926 with French and British support. Both France and Britain established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

The issue of reparations, the Gordian knot up to this point, moved toward resolution by an international commission headed by Charles C. Dawes, an American banker who would later become vice-president of the United States under Calvin Coolidge. Germany's payment of reparations was put on an economically more realistic foundation in 1924, taking into account Germany's ability to pay, which meant an initial respite in payments so that the German economy could recover, followed by a slow increase, to 2 billion marks per year by 1928–9, at which point further negotiations would be undertaken to determine the total sum to be paid. The plan was not really popular in Germany – and was violently denounced by both the extreme right and extreme left – but it seemed at

least to be replacing raw moral outrage with a degree of reasonableness, and to be a step in the direction of negotiation rather than confrontation.

A resolution of the broader diplomatic deadlock between France and Germany was achieved in the so-called Locarno Agreements of October 1925, which included a disavowal by Germany of any attempt to regain Alsace-Lorraine by force or to remilitarize the Rhineland. In principle at least, these agreements were freely made by Germany, not the result of a *Diktat*, as with the Versailles Treaty. But much remained tentative; the French public, especially its right wing, was little more satisfied with the new treaty than was the German public. The good feelings of the brief Locarno era lulled some into a sense of optimism for the future, but subsequent developments were to demonstrate the weak foundations of that optimism.

The Brief Rule of the British Labour Party

Britain had of course long been the model liberal-democratic country, but in its case, too, the left in the interwar period was divided and unable to provide effective leadership, whether in domestic or foreign policy. However, to speak of “the left” in Britain meant something rather different from that in France, Germany, or Italy. Many lower-class voters who had previously voted either Conservative or Liberal were now moving toward the Labour Party, founded in the prewar years but at that point not attracting a large vote. Most of its leaders had initially avoided association with socialist ideology, but at the war’s end the party adopted a new program that looked to a socialized economy and the demolition of capitalism. The Labour Party at the same time was experiencing a dramatic spurt in membership: from 2.5 million in 1917 to 3.5 million in 1919 to 4.4 million in 1920. The closely associated trade unions grew to 6.5 million by the same year. (The new British Communist Party attracted only meager popular support throughout the interwar period, though it did attract a number of prominent intellectuals.)

The war-time coalition government under David Lloyd George had been strengthened by the Khaki Elections of December 1918, but long-simmering dissatisfaction with his leadership finally led his Conservative allies to withdraw their support in late 1922. The Conservative Party then ruled alone, still enjoying a comfortable majority. But the Labour Party had grown so rapidly that by 1922 it passed the Liberal Party as the second largest party in the country. It thus became, by tradition, the official party of opposition. When the Conservatives decided, in the elections of December 1923, to make tariff protection a key feature of their party plank (the first time since 1846 that any British party had sponsored tariffs in peacetime), they lost their majority. Britain then had three parties, none of which could rule alone.

A Labour government took over in January 1924, supported ambiguously by the Liberal Party. What Labour might achieve through this unusual situation was uncertain. On the one hand, it could be considered an opportunity for Labour’s leaders to prove themselves, to gain experience in the exercise of power, and to win wider respect from Britain’s middle-class voters. On the other hand, it risked demonstrating those leaders’ lack of readiness (a few years earlier, Churchill had haughtily dismissed the lower-class leaders of the Labour Party as “unfit to rule”). Gaining formal political power did not represent a chance to put the socialism of the new party program into

effect, since the Liberal and Conservative majority would prevent it. There remained an ill-defined but limited area of non-socialist, radical-democratic reform that might be tolerated by the Liberals.

Where the Labour party had the most leeway was in foreign policy, since the Liberals were also opposed to the previously punitive stance toward Germany. But, beyond initiating a more conciliatory foreign policy, Labour's first experience with power ended badly and lasted only ten months. Labour's recognition of the Soviet Union was turned against it, the Conservatives effectively charging Labour with being "soft on Communism." In the elections of October 1924, both the Labour and the Liberal parties lost seats, and the Conservative returned to power, where they would stay for most of the interwar period. The alleged threat from the revolutionary left became an even more explosive issue in 1926, when a strike by coal miners evolved into a general strike, the most complete and – at least to part of the nation – the most threatening example of working-class solidarity in British history. Organized strikebreakers, middle- and upper-class university students in many cases, caught the imagination of a frightened property-owning public. In the end, the strikers were obliged to go back to work, with lower wages and longer hours.

The Stock-Market Crash, November 1929: The Beginning of the Great Depression

The Republican Party was in power in the United States when the stock-market crash occurred and was naturally blamed for it, all the more so since President Herbert Hoover's response, basically to allow the free market to self-adjust, seemed inadequate. As chance would have it, however, the Labour Party was in power in Britain (though again dependent on Liberal support in Parliament) and the German Social Democrat Hermann Müller was chancellor in Germany, at the head of a wide Weimar coalition. But in fact neither the political right nor the left fully understood what was happening to the world economy, to say nothing of being able to respond effectively to the market crash and ensuing depression, with the partial exception of the Scandinavian social democrats (further discussed in Chapter 23).

It now seems obvious that the economic settlement after the war was no less short-sighted than the diplomatic one; both failed to recognize the degree of interdependence of the countries concerned, and both were characterized by stubborn attachments to national sovereignty, attachments that ultimately revealed themselves to be self-destructive. Again, the influence of the United States was paradoxical. Wilson had wanted to make the world safe for political democracy but also for free-market capitalism, in which the expanding economy of the United States was expected to play a major role. But Wilson's League of Nations faltered without American leadership. Moreover, American economic self-interest and the interest of other nations were not always seen as compatible by those nations. Perhaps the least controversial observation about a dizzyingly complex set of issues is that America's economic rise was akin to a force of nature. The dilemmas of accommodating the American economy in the European scene were in a way comparable to those of accommodating a rapidly rising Germany, although the Americans were obviously much more successful in eventually establishing their place in the sun than were the Germans.

During World War I, American farmers expanded production enormously, and after 1919 it proved impossible to return to prewar patterns of trade, agricultural and otherwise, in part because of the tariff walls and economic nationalism of the many new nations but also because “overproductive” American agriculture worked to depress agricultural prices in Europe, angering and radicalizing Europe’s peasantry, a class that in most countries had long been uncomfortable with principles of free trade. The discontent of Europe’s peasantry with the ups and downs of the free market had been familiar enough between 1815 and 1914, but the downward plunge of November 1929 proved to be “the big one,” as is said of earthquakes, in both severity and duration, marking the end of the relatively optimistic 1920s and the beginning of the deeply troubled 1930s.

By the early 1930s, liberal-democratic parliamentary rule had been severely discredited nearly everywhere. Europe’s major economies were dependent upon American investments, whether directly or indirectly, and when American investors began to withdraw investment funds from Europe – actually beginning in 1928 but with special urgency after the stock-market crash – many European economies went into freefall. By 1932 the industrial production of Germany and the United States had dropped nearly 50 percent; unemployment reached around 6 million in Germany and 12 million in the United States. The parties of the radical right and left gained new appeal (to be explored in Chapter 18), whereas in the former tsarist empire Stalin’s leadership of what came to be termed “the Soviet Experiment” moved finally into unknown territory – contradictory, surprising, and in many ways baffling – to be discussed in Chapter 17.

Further Reading

Virtually all histories of modern Germany (e.g., Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany: The Divided Nation 1918–2008*, 2008) and those of the Nazi period (see Chapter 18) have prominent chapters on how and why democracy failed in the Weimar Republic. An older, long-standard account is W. William Halperin’s *Germany Tried Democracy* (1965).

Joel Colton’s biography *Leo Blum: A Humanist in Politics* (1987) can serve as an attractive introduction to the history of the left in France in the interwar years (most relevantly in the Popular Front era (see Chapter 19)) but also in the years immediate before 1936.

The British experience in these years is provocatively addressed in Samuel H. Beer’s *British Politics in the Collectivist Age* (1969).

For the economic aspect of liberal failure in the interwar years, see C.P. Kindleberg, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (1973).

17 Stalinist Russia and International Communism

From 1921 to 1928, the years of the New Economic Policy (NEP), relative calm prevailed in Soviet Russia. The country began to recover economically after 1921, approaching prewar levels of productivity by late 1927, largely attributable, so it was widely believed, to the country's pragmatic embrace of market incentives, although good weather had much to do with it.

However, the contradictions and dilemmas of Bolshevik rule had not been resolved. They were made all the more pressing with Lenin's premature death in January 1924, after a series of debilitating strokes beginning in 1922. After a few years of uncertainty and rivalry among Lenin's lieutenants, it became clear by the late 1920s that Stalin was in control of the party and the country. To initial and widespread surprise, from late 1928 to 1939, Stalin initiated revolutionary change, remaking the economic base of the country and eliminating, through "blood purges," a large part of its ruling cadres.

Stalin and Stalinism

For many observers, Stalin ranks next to Hitler as an example of the power of a malevolent will in history. Both men arose from humble birth and obscurity; along with Mussolini, they could be seen as the personification of the new age of the masses and of "great dictators." Stalin can be held responsible for more deaths and human suffering than Hitler, mostly because he ruled over a large country for approximately twenty-five years whereas Hitler had power over a smaller area for only twelve (though in the last five that area expanded rapidly). The importance of understanding Stalin and Stalinist Communism ranks, then, with that of understanding Hitler and Nazism, all

the more so since Communism continued to rule in Russia for nearly a half-century after Stalin's death. Moreover, Communism spread into eastern Europe, Asia, and Cuba after World War II, whereas the appeals of Nazism collapsed with Hitler's suicide, if not before. Russia and Germany, among the most aggrieved of the losing powers of World War I, came to appear, in their Communist and Nazi incarnations, the voice of the future for many, especially after the onset of the Depression in late 1929 and the launch of the "second revolution" of collectivization and the five-year plan in Russia in early 1928.

Stalin and Hitler were initially dismissed as second-rate figures, laughable even, only to rise dramatically in esteem to the point of being treated as nearly divine. But in most other regards their life stories and personalities were markedly different. Stalin, active as a revolutionary in Georgia, on the southern fringes of the tsarist empire, was at first relatively unknown among the leading Bolsheviks. Lenin was the recognized leader of the party. Other leaders, such as Gregory Zinoviev and Nikolai Bukharin, were far better known than Stalin by the early 1920s, especially outside Russia. In those years, the notion of "Stalinism" would have been considered outlandish. But, within less than a decade, Stalin had risen above all other party leaders, and within another decade, by the time of the party congress of 1939, he had become a towering presence. By that year nearly all the Old Bolsheviks, those who had been prominent in the Bolshevik Party during Lenin's lifetime, were either in prison, in exile, or in their graves.

In nineteenth-century Russia, opponents of liberalization had argued that, given the country's vast expanses and the diversity of its peoples, only a ruler with great powers could prevent the tsarist empire from dissolving into chaos. That argument came to have a paradoxical counterpart by the mid-1920s, in that the need for despotic leadership seemed even more pressing, now to preserve Communist rule and save "the revolution." In short, both Russian history and the contradictions of Bolshevik rule by 1924 suggested that some sort of all-powerful leader was necessary – yet *not* a Napoleon; that is, not like the man who brought an end to the French Revolution. Stalin would present a new historical model: a Napoleon who pushed the revolution forward in an extreme fashion.

The 1920s: Lingerin Dilemmas and the Industrialization Debate

With the passing of the Red Years (1919–21), many outside observers still did not know what to make of the new rulers of the much diminished empire once ruled by the tsars. The Bolsheviks had shown unexpected powers of survival, but, with the introduction of the NEP in March 1921, Bolshevik rule seemed to change in nature, at least to some observers, since that policy was widely viewed in the west as a chastened withdrawal from Communist principles toward a kind of normalcy.

Europe's major nations began to extend diplomatic recognition to Soviet Russia: first Germany in 1922 and then France and Britain in 1924. Others followed, although the United States delayed until November 1933, after the New Deal came into power. By the mid-1920s, Europe's capitalist countries themselves were enjoying economic recovery, further suggesting that the world proletarian revolution was receding into a highly uncertain future.

In the estimation of most Bolshevik leaders, however, the mismatch of ruler and ruled, the dilemma of proletarian revolutionaries ruling a bourgeois-peasant country, had by no means been resolved. In its first stages, the NEP was a hesitant, somewhat incoherent response to the increasingly violent opposition to Bolshevik rule. After March 1921, the Bolsheviks seemed to be assuming a conciliatory posture in economic, social, and cultural terms. However, Bolshevik rule became ever more dictatorial. The increased emphasis on the need for a military-like discipline within the Bolshevik Party was palpably related to the recognition by party leaders of the grave dangers of factionalism, given the party's declining popular support.

Bolshevik leaders, then, presented contradictory faces to the rest of the world in the early 1920s. On the one hand, they expressed a desire to have the Soviet Union recognized as a normal sovereign state. On the other, the Communist International continued its activities, under Bolshevik direction, in building up Communist parties outside Russia, with the all too obvious ultimate goal of a violent overthrow of other sovereign states. The NEP also had its contradictions, in that by its very nature the economic recovery of the NEP contributed to anxiety about the future and to growing differences within the party. These differences were expressed in what has often been described as "the industrialization debate," in which the party's right or liberal wing called for a continuance of gradual industrialization under the NEP ("socialism in one country") and the party's left wing looked to an accelerated and "coerced" rate of industrial growth, linked to a renewed emphasis on fomenting world revolution ("permanent revolution").

However, the terms of debate, as so often with Russian Marxism, are easily misunderstood. Aside from the fact that "left" and "right" in Soviet Russia by this time had a tenuous relation to what those terms meant elsewhere, all Bolshevik leaders agreed that Soviet Russia for the immediate future needed to industrialize on its own, with no significant aid from outside the country. Similarly, all agreed that the ultimate victory of Communism in Russia could only come after the hostile capitalist world had itself succumbed to proletarian revolution. The differences between the right and left in the Bolshevik Party had most fundamentally to do with attitudes to the peasants: How much should they be coerced by the state, in order to use the anticipated higher profit derived from such coercion for investment in heavy industry? Trotsky and the left thought the coercion should be stepped up, with an emphasis on the most rapid possible growth of heavy industry and industrial infrastructure, whereas the right, led by Bukharin, believed in continuing the more cooperative stance in regard to the peasants via a relatively free market and an emphasis on the production of consumer goods that satisfied peasant demands. Bukharin argued that too much "squeezing" of the peasants threatened to alienate them to a dangerous degree. Bukharin and the party's right wing made much of the need to preserve the delicate *smychka*, the peculiar cooperative "union" that Russia's peasantry and proletariat had established, according to official doctrine, under Bolshevik leadership.

Even the terms "cooperation" vs. "coercion" tend to oversimplify, since all factions of the party recognized the need for both; the differences came down to a matter of emphasis rather than starkly different paths, at least until early 1928. But matters were further complicated by the fact that these different perceptions of what was required economically became intertwined with the struggle for power among Lenin's

lieutenants. Lenin had been in poor health since the middle of 1921, when he had suffered a mild heart attack, but in mid-1922 he suffered a paralyzing stroke, and party leaders held their breaths as their seemingly irreplaceable leader lingered between sickness and health for over a year, with periods of recovery followed by relapses. On January 21, 1924, after suffering a further major stroke, he was finally laid to rest, just short of fifty-four years of age.

Lenin's death left a chasm and a hugely problematic legacy. As Marxists, the Bolsheviks were committed to a belief in the power of impersonal forces, not individual personalities, but they nonetheless amply recognized that Lenin's personal role had been crucial – in the creation of the Bolshevik Party, in the success of the November Revolution, and in the survival of the Bolshevik regime thereafter. Although often denounced as a “splitter” in the prewar period, Lenin was nonetheless credited after 1917 with keeping party differences within manageable proportions, if only barely. Already by his mid-forties he was being referred to as *starik* (the old man). He gradually won the respect of his younger lieutenants, who often differed with him but ultimately accepted his decisions.

By the time of his first stroke, Lenin had become the undisputed leader not only of the party but also of the entire Soviet nation, the *Vozhd* (“leader,” a term with charismatic connotations, much like *Duce*, a term that was coming into usage in the early 1920s in Fascist Italy, or *Führer*, which would later be applied to Hitler). Although Lenin resisted flattery and adulation, a remarkable personality cult began to grow up around him: Statues, posters, and books glorifying him proliferated. Petrograd was renamed Leningrad in 1924. His embalmed remains were put on public display so that Russia's masses could shuffle by in veneration. His mausoleum served as a further symbol of the contradictions of this regime – led by modern revolutionaries who despised the superstitions of the past but who were perfectly willing to exploit them when it was useful to do so.

Some observers have speculated that if Lenin had lived a normal life span the authority he enjoyed would have allowed him to guide the country in directions less horrendous than those of the next two decades. Others have suggested that, in terms of his subsequent reputation, Lenin was lucky to have died when he did, for the country faced such immense challenges that no single man, however capable, could have avoided ruthlessly harsh means in confronting them. Aside from the catastrophic material losses of the years 1914 to 1921, by the time of Lenin's death, corruption, cynicism, and plain incompetence in the Party and state were rampant. A thought haunted many: Could the Bolshevik Revolution have been some sort of dreadful mistake, a “wrong turn” that “history” had somehow made?

Stalin's Victory in the Struggle for Power

In January 1924, it was obvious that none of Lenin's lieutenants could replace him. They spoke, rather hollowly, of a “collective leadership” that would follow “Leninist principles.” However, those principles were mired in ambiguities; they “worked” only when Lenin was present to provide their “correct” interpretation and application, which often enough seemed to violate the principles he had only recently proclaimed.



Figure 17.1 Lenin and Stalin, after Lenin's first stroke. This photograph was used to emphasize the closeness to Lenin that Stalin claimed. *Source:* SSPL / Getty Images.

It was significant that he had dominated the party by the power of his intellect and personality, not by violence or the threat of it to those within the party who differed with him. However, that non-violent domination within the party stood in stark contrast to the dictatorship his party exercised over the Soviet population, in which violence was essential – with little hesitation in exercising it, even against the working class, based on the firm belief that the party's leaders were on the correct side of history, that protecting “the revolution” was the end that justified whatever means necessary.

In retrospect it can be seen that a new model of how the party could be led was emerging as Lenin lay dying, one that also did not rely upon the threat of violence, at least not at first. That is, Stalin, through his post as party secretary and the exercise of several other important offices in the Soviet state, was quietly establishing a cadre of lieutenants loyal to him. He did so not through intellectual prowess, comparable to that of Lenin, but through his everyday control of appointments. Such was what party bosses did in building party machines in western-style democracies, but it assumed an incomparably greater importance in a one-party, dictatorial state.

Equally important to Stalin's early rise was his pose as a modest, conciliatory, and loyal Leninist (see Figure 17.1). That pose was in sharp contrast to the image at the time of Leon Trotsky, who seemed Lenin's most likely successor. He was admired for his

intellectual brilliance and celebrated for his decisive roles in the revolution and civil war, but he was also notorious for his arrogance, to say nothing of his ill-concealed contempt for many other party leaders. Trotsky may have been widely venerated by the party rank and file, but he was also disliked and feared by many party leaders.

Stalin effectively played upon the apprehensions other leaders had about Trotsky's ambitions, and he often brought up, to telling effect, Trotsky's ferocious doctrinal controversies with Lenin before 1914. As head of the Red Army at the time of Lenin's death, Trotsky could have potentially called upon the ultimate source of power in a showdown, but he did not use it. Quite the contrary, he was so intent on demonstrating his lack of Napoleonic ambitions – the unforgivable sin for a Marxist – that in early 1925 he allowed his military posts to slip from his grasp.

Trotsky clearly misread the extent of the apprehensions about him, and he shared the failure of the other Bolshevik leaders in not recognizing Stalin's cunning. Stalin's personal style no doubt lacked Trotsky's brilliance; anti-Stalinists would later mock Stalin's low-key, simple, and repetitive prose as "Dzhugashvilese" (after his original Georgian name, Yosef Dzhugashvili), but the simple truth is that Stalin, if plodding in style, was more effective – and finally more intelligent – than was initially recognized. Trotsky and many other intellectuals in the party could never quite grasp the extent of that intelligence.

Stalin's control of the party, as measured in various party votes, had become extensive by 1927, and so too was his control, through the Comintern, of the Communist parties outside Russia. His rapid rise to iconic status in those parties may be considered surprising, in that he was not known for any prominent role in the revolution and had not even attended the Comintern's first meetings. Stalin spoke no western-European language and had spent no significant time in Europe. In the 1920s, he was in no position to make the kinds of appointments to the leading positions of western Communist parties that he was making in the various branches of the Party in Russia.

The simplest explanation of Stalin's rapid rise to prominence and popularity in the non-Russian parties was that those parties and the Comintern had been "Stalinized" – by other Bolshevik leaders – although the process was described at that time as "Bolshevization." The point is revealing in regard to the long-standing debate about how much Stalin corrupted the principles of Leninism. In fact, from the beginning other Bolsheviks ruled the Comintern "Stalinistically." Contrary to the official position (that the Comintern was ruled by its member Communist parties), it was in truth ruled much as the Bolshevik Party inside Russia was ruled – by a party elite, from the top down, utterly intolerant of dissent.

Stalin and the Jewish Question in the Bolshevik Party

Stalin as leader of the Soviet Union became Stalin the personification of "the revolution" – to be protected at all costs – for those Communists outside Russia who had so far failed to make their own revolution. The Stalinization of the non-Russian Communist parties also involved promoting a different class of leaders, men of lower-class origins, less educated and distinctly less intellectual than those who had headed the parties in their first few years. These new party leaders were also less often of Jewish background, paralleling the trend inside Russia in the 1920s for "workers from the

bench" to be promoted to the upper ranks of the party, which had previously been dominated by bourgeois and "cosmopolitan" intellectuals.

There was, then, a many-sided symbolism in Stalin's victory over Trotsky, as also was the case with his subsequent triumph over his two temporary allies, Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, in the anti-Trotsky party alliance that formed immediately after Lenin's death. The party's leading cadres in Russia and the leaders of the Communist parties in Europe both were becoming more proletarian and less Jewish. The symbolism would become especially pronounced by the late 1930s, given the number of Jews charged with treason in the Purge Trials of 1937–8. Stalin had long been known for making crude remarks about Jews in private, but it makes little sense to describe him as blatantly exploiting hostility to Jews at this, given the large number of Jews in leadership positions. Bolshevik leaders themselves, whatever their ethnic background, were perfectly aware of how widespread anti-Jewish feelings were in the general population, making it risky, when the party was trying to enhance its popularity, to have a Jew such as Trotsky (or Zinoviev, or Kamenev) as Lenin's successor. Stalin, even if not Russian, was more acceptable.

As previously described, apprehensions about "rising" Jews had assumed a political form in much of Europe by the 1880s. Those apprehensions rose to a pinnacle in the immediate postwar period, especially once it was accepted that Bolshevik rule in Russia was likely to last and, even more, once it became believed that "Judeo-Bolshevism" threatened to spread to the rest of Europe. Winston Churchill wrote in 1919 that Jews were "the mainspring of every subversive movement ... [and had] gripped the Russian people by the hair of their heads ... [becoming] the undisputed masters of that enormous empire."

Here, then, was another striking paradox associated with the Bolshevik Revolution: That revolution had been proclaimed as a step in the direction of liberating humanity from racist hatreds, but the actual result was different, in that an intensified fear of revolutionary Jews came to rival or even exceed admiration for "the Soviet experiment." Racial fears and fantasies became more firmly intertwined with those of class identity and right-wing political conviction. And, for all the obvious exaggerations associated with such fears, there was a reality that even Jews had difficulty grasping or evaluating calmly: The position, visibility, and presumed power of Jews in Europe had been significantly enhanced since 1917, even while the mass of the Jewish population remained poor, powerless, and vulnerable, especially after 1929.

The Balfour Declaration at this point was more significant in potential than in immediate reality, but Jews were widely believed to have exerted influence behind the scenes in getting it accepted, as they later had played a major role at the Paris Peace Conference in the composition of the minority treaties. The new Weimar Republic was perceived as a "Jew Republic" by its enemies, because of the role Jews had played in its formation. A Jewish legal expert had written much of its constitution, and Jews were far more prominent in the initial governments than they had ever been under the monarchy. More alarming for many conservative observers was that Russia, previously without a single Jew in any position of government authority, had become, as Churchill charged, a country in which Jews played a dominant role.

The belief that Jews controlled the Soviet Union cannot be dismissed as an utterly empty fantasy, whatever the exaggerations on the antisemitic right. Men of Jewish origin were in leadership positions in two of the most important power centers of the new Soviet state, the army and the secret police; a Jew had become president of the Soviet

state, and another headed the Communist International. Jews were especially numerous in the party-controlled press, and the Bolshevik Party secretary from 1917 to 1922 was a Jew (replaced by Stalin). In truth, there were few arenas of authority and influence in the new regime in which Jews were not strongly overrepresented in relation to their percentage of the general population. However, a majority of Russia's Jews were not Bolsheviks, and Bolshevik Jews were not religious Jews. In fact, religious Jews tended to fear the Bolsheviks at least as much as Christians did, for the simple reason that the Bolsheviks were opponents of all religion but also because revolutionary Jews were believed to bring discredit – and a rising threat of violence – to all Jews.

Collectivization and the Five-Year Plan

Stalin's rise to leadership of the Bolshevik Party represented a kind of solution to the dilemmas left by Lenin's death (that is, how the party was to function). A larger one remained: how to reconcile rule by the party of the proletariat in a country that remained overwhelmingly peasant. Bukharin, one of Stalin's allies in defeating Trotsky, continued to argue that preserving the NEP was the best way to build socialism in one country. But he had also begun to rethink some of his positions, troubled as he was by the many emerging problems associated with the NEP. One of particular importance was the NEP's slow pace in building heavy industry, given the widespread belief in the Party that the capitalist powers were intent on overthrowing the Soviet regime. War scares repeatedly arose, underlining the point of Russia's vulnerability to invasion.

Bukharin had a basic concern: to preserve as much as possible the peasant–proletarian nexus (*smychka*) of 1917. In late 1927 his concern was suddenly revealed to be justified, when grain procurements turned out to be only half of what they had been a year before in a similar period. The reasons seemed clear: Those peasants with surplus grain or other agricultural goods to sell were no longer doing so, largely because the market prices for agricultural goods, which were subject to manipulation by the state, had dropped so low. Bukharin argued that the crisis could be overcome by allowing agricultural prices to rise higher and by adjusting the products of the industrial sector in the direction of providing more consumer goods of the sort the peasantry would want to buy (rather than the state concentrating on heavy industry and building infrastructure). But many party leaders were alarmed, even inclined to panic, by the sudden drop in grain procurements. Stalin apparently concluded that this hoarding represented a portentous challenge to Bolshevik rule, one that required a resolute response, not the concessions and compromises favored by Bukharin.

Other developments by the late 1920s had contributed to grumbling and rising discontent in the party, tending to put the drop in grain procurements in a more ominous light. Party morale was low, in part because the NEP had become an affront to those activists who had sacrificed so much in the revolutionary struggles of 1917–21 only to find themselves in an economy where, as they saw it, unscrupulous petty capitalists (dubbed “Nepmen”) and greedy large peasants (“kulaks,” from a Russian word suggesting “tight fists”) were daily gaining greater wealth, confidence, and power.

Stalin and other party leaders decided in January 1928 upon “extraordinary measures,” at least for the short term. These developed into something starkly coercive,

including arrests of those who were discovered to be hoarding grain and requisitions at gun point, all too reminiscent of what had characterized War Communism from 1917 to 1921. In a short-term sense, the extraordinary measures of January 1928 were successful; the grain collected exceeded that of any of the previous three years. However, in a longer-range sense, the implications of these extraordinary measures were ominous, since they set in motion a chain reaction, one that soon rendered impossible a return to the cooperative emphasis of the NEP.

How long various other options remained open after January 1928 has been debated by historians, but in the next months and years Stalin radically reversed the course he had defended before 1928. He led the nation – to the horror of Bukharin and his supporters – in a starkly “left-wing” direction, one that was more extreme in squeezing the peasantry than had been earlier advocated by Trotsky. It is unlikely that Stalin had plotted out in advance the measures he would take. Evidence suggests that, as in the case of the NEP in early 1921, the initial steps in January 1928 were tentative, but then “events” – many unforeseen – swept Stalin and other party leaders along.

It is especially difficult to believe that Stalin fully appreciated the catastrophic implications of alienating the peasantry so fundamentally – that is, not simply weakening but utterly destroying the *smychka*. Ever more brutal measures came to be perceived as necessary, ones that Stalin and other party leaders were not able to control, once they had openly declared the necessity of “liquidating the kulaks as a class” (“dekulakization,” in party jargon), accompanied by steps to collectivize agriculture. (Only a few years earlier Stalin had been known for his oft-repeated denunciation of Trotsky and the left of the party for “underestimating the Russian peasantry” in its willingness to ally with the proletariat.)

The often erratic developments of the next four to five years also suggest confusion more than clear-minded premeditation. Collectivization in principle involved merging small, individual peasant plots into much larger units, trying to attract the poorest peasants with the prospect of taking over the lands, livestock, and tools of the “rich” kulaks. The *kolkhoz* (derived from the Russian for “collective farm,” *kollektivnoe khozyaistvo*) would supposedly be all the more attractive to most peasants, since it was to be supplied by the state with modern tractors and other agricultural machinery. There was another advantage to the collective farm, one that many concluded was decisive in persuading Stalin to move sharply to the left: Russia’s peasants could be more efficiently brought under state control if they were gathered into large units.

In an abstract economic sense, such merging of small and inefficient units could be termed rational, in that it would enable economies of scale and facilitate the use of modern agricultural techniques (large machinery, fertilizers, insecticides, etc.). But this economic theory had only a remote relationship to what actually happened, especially in the opening stages of collectivization. Nearly all peasants, the poorest included, resisted, often violently. Many destroyed their grain, burned their equipment and barns, and slaughtered their animals rather than give them over to the detested commissars. The kulaks (an extremely elastic term in actual application) were arrested en masse, sent to Siberia, or herded into camps, under the cruelest imaginable of conditions, resulting in untold misery and death by the hundreds of thousands, ultimately millions.

Total agricultural production tumbled in the years of collectivization. So many animals were slaughtered by resentful peasants that recovery of the 1927 livestock numbers was not reached until the 1950s. Yet, astonishingly, this ruthless squeezing of

the peasants was effective enough to support rapid growth in the urban-industrial sector. That sector was now also fundamentally reorganized in what was called the “five-year plan”: Private enterprise was outlawed and a planned economy introduced. The seemingly impossible feat of extracting sufficient capital from the countryside to support massive investment in industry and population growth of the urban sector was accomplished by instituting working conditions in the new collective farms that were close to slavery. Consumption levels in the countryside were radically curtailed, at times pushing the population to starvation. Exact numbers remain uncertain, but it has been estimated that as many as 8 million men, women, and children perished as a direct result of “dekulakization,” forced collectivization, mass executions, and supervised starvation – a figure roughly comparable to that of the men who died at the front in World War I.

In the emerging factories the proletariat, the country’s purported ruling class (millions of whom were peasants who had been moved into the cities with the onset of collectivization) endured long hours, low pay, and “voluntary” work on the weekends and holidays. In material terms, even for the most fortunate of the lower orders, this was an austere period; for others it was simply catastrophic. Yet it could be said that a socialist economy was finally established, capitalism demolished.

Whether the goal was worth the price is another question entirely. Much of the old world in Russia had been destroyed from 1917 on. The tsarist political structures were gone and the wealthy classes expropriated. However, as noted in Chapter 14, when the Bolsheviks approved the takeover by the peasants of individual plots of land, something like a bourgeois revolution occurred, in that private property seemed to have been affirmed. The relations of production in the 1920s remained predominantly non-socialist (or had slid back to the “petty-bourgeois capitalism” of the NEP). The “second revolution” from 1928 to 1934 was, then, a *real* socialist revolution: The countryside, where most citizens of the Soviet Union still lived, was ruthlessly socialized; economic individualism, the private exploitation of the land, was radically curtailed. In the urban-industrial sector, the Nepmen and the market economy were replaced by a centrally planned, socialist economy.

To term these changes “socialism” tends to stretch the concept beyond tolerable limits. It was certainly not the socialism that Marx had envisaged, characterized by high levels of productivity, personal freedom, and the withering away of the state, after a brief proletarian dictatorship. It more resembled the state-directed transformation of Russian society that had been imposed by Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century – or perhaps even more closely, at least in terms of the subjugation of the population, the slave societies of ancient times.

As is the case in conceptualizing the Bolshevik Revolution itself, Marxist categories tend to be misleading to describe what happened between 1928 and 1934. And, just as the Bolshevik accession to power in November 1917 seemed inconceivable seven months earlier, nothing like the second revolution could have been successful before the Bolsheviks had concentrated enough power, this time requiring over a decade, to undertake what constituted an all-out attack on the country’s peasantry, one that was in effect a civil war of nightmarish dimensions.

That the second revolution ultimately accomplished its goals may be considered one of the most astonishing developments of the twentieth century, perhaps of all times. However, to term it successful also stretches the meaning of the word to intolerable

limits. Its success resembled that of the November Revolution in its paradoxes: The formal success of socialist goals, themselves based on the humanism of the Enlightenment, was accompanied by brutality, appalling scales of human suffering, and mass death. Most people would pray to be spared this kind of success.

The seventeenth party congress, in 1934, declared itself “the Congress of Victors.” The most fundamental battle had been won and the collective ownership of the means of production assured. No less significantly, industrial production had soared. It would continue to make remarkable gains – unbelievable to much of the rest of the world – for the rest of the 1930s. Those gains, however, were “unbelievable” in several senses. Published statistics were unreliable and often transparently padded, the workmanship shoddy, and quality control minimal – resulting in accidents and failure of equipment. But, even accepting such qualifications, the accomplishments were substantial. In approximately twenty years, Soviet Russia had moved from total military defeat, devastating civil war, and near total economic ruin to a level of industrial productivity that ranked only under those of the United States and Germany.

Russia’s upheavals were not over. When the second five-year plan was well under way, the country experienced another kind revolution, one that intensified the paradoxes – and horrors – of Bolshevik victory even further.

The Blood Purges

With the Congress of Victors, signs of relaxation, even liberalization, were everywhere. The country and at least some of the leaders of the Party were looking forward to a period of relative relaxation, after the “heroic” efforts of the previous five years. Many of those who had been defeated by Stalin in the struggle for power and expelled from the Party were allowed to rejoin it and take up new responsibilities. A new constitution was prepared, and Bukharin played a key role in its composition. It was a remarkable document, widely praised even in the west. It guaranteed Soviet citizens civil rights of the sort included in the French and American constitutions but in addition a wide range of other rights and protections, including guarantees of employment, healthcare, and retirement. The ranks of those eligible to vote were opened wide; the earlier exclusion of the propertied and formerly privileged no longer held. At least in principle, all adult men and women were enfranchised.

There were parallels on the international level. The Comintern reversed the policy of class warfare it had proclaimed from 1928 to 1934 and took up the cause of the Popular Front, a political coalition designed to rally all anti-fascist forces. Stalin, in an interview with a western journalist, stressed that the Soviet Union was now committed to a peaceful, non-aggressive foreign policy; he dismissed the notion of world revolution as a “tragic-comical misunderstanding.” At least some western observers were willing to entertain the possibility that the Soviet regime was entering a period of long-range peaceful development. Similarly, many western observers were impressed with the Soviet Union’s economic achievements (the extent of the suffering involved was not widely appreciated in the west), especially since those achievements stood in such stark contrast to developments in capitalist Europe, which was still staggering from the effects of the Great Depression.

However, it soon became apparent that all was not harmony and forgiveness within the Communist Party. Although since 1928 Stalin had achieved ever more firm control of the party and country, about a quarter of the delegates to the seventeenth congress voted against his continuing as party secretary, apparently surprising and alarming him. He was not the kind of man to let such opposition survive. His revolutionary name, Stalin, derived from the Russian word for steel (*stahl*); he had been further hardened by the travails of collectivization. Those close to him observed growing paranoiac tendencies. Precisely what was going through his mind is of course unknowable, but it appears likely that he believed a coalition of moderates in the party, including some of the younger, up-and-coming members he himself had appointed, was maneuvering to impose limits on his rule, perhaps even to replace him. As was the case in the struggle for power after Lenin's stroke, Stalin moved initially with disarming subtlety, masking ruthless intent and merciless follow-through.

On December 1, 1934, the Leningrad party secretary, Sergei Kirov, was assassinated. Kirov was one of Stalin's outstanding protégés, handsome and popular, a much-vaunted "new Soviet man," one of many emerging from the common people, growing up under Communist rule, and assuming leadership positions by the 1930s. Stalin, seemingly grief-stricken and outraged by the assassination, alluded darkly to conspiracies afoot, and vowed to root out those guilty. However, evidence emerged after Stalin's death that he was himself the instigator of the assassination, since he feared Kirov was being groomed to succeed him.

Previously Stalin had arranged for his opponents to be disgraced and expelled from the Party, but now they were charged with criminal conspiracies and sentenced to death or to lengthy prison terms. A chain reaction set in: As various arrests were made, confessions implicating others were regularly announced in the newspapers. A series of show trials was finally held, in which prominent party leaders, including a large number of Old Bolsheviks, confessed to the most implausible of charges (e.g., to having plotted, years before, to assassinate Lenin). Similarly, military leaders, such as Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, revered for his role in Russia's civil war, were arrested and charged with treason. Nearly all of those charged eventually confessed; executions often followed a few days after their trials. Many observers at the time suspected that those who confessed had been tortured, and subsequent evidence has supported that suspicion. However, some of the most prominent figures seem to have been subjected to psychological pressure rather than the more gruesome forms of physical abuse, or they were led to believe that, if they confessed, their families would be saved from arrest and torture.

Accusations of "counterrevolutionary crimes" and association with various conspiracies spread even to the lower ranks of party and government, developing into an orgy of denunciations, counterdenunciations, and mass arrests. Ordinary citizens were pulled in, innocent of any real crimes, charged with such things as telling a political joke unfavorable to Stalin. Millions of Soviet citizens were sentenced to death or to years of hard labor (often resulting in death). Perhaps as many as 20 million were imprisoned, becoming part of a huge slave-labor population, in what later became known as the Gulag, an acronym made famous by the 1973 novel *The Gulag Archipelago*, by Nobel laureate in literature Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

In the most infamous of those camps, such as the one at Vorkuta, an arctic mining town, deaths occurred not as an explicit policy of mass extermination as in Nazi

Germany but rather because of unspeakably harsh working conditions (exposure, inadequate food, disease, brutal treatment by guards). There were countless summary executions in these years, as during collectivization, that included women, the aged, and even minors, numbering at the very least in the tens of thousands, usually by a bullet to the back of the head.

Some scholars have suggested a significant parallel in the two totalitarian states of the 1930s and 1940s: Hitler's Nazi Reich murdered millions of Jews because they were considered a dangerous race; Stalin's Soviet Union murdered millions of kulaks and other "bourgeois" elements because they were part of a dangerous social class. The comparison, whatever validity it may have, fails insofar as the mass murder associated with the Purge Trials drew in millions of all classes and ethnicities, including large numbers of those Jews who had earlier risen to prominent positions in party and state. Another difference is that mass murder in the Soviet Union, while in absolute numbers greater than that directed by the leaders of the Third Reich, lasted over a longer period, in repeated waves from 1919 to 1939. Another kind of difference is that the Nazi camps were overrun by enemy armies at the end of the war and many of them exposed to the scrutiny of the world, whereas the camps in Soviet Russia, while later described by some of those few who survived, still have not been subjected by scholars to a scrutiny even remotely comparable in thoroughness to that given to the camps of the Nazis.

What was driving this mass hysteria, this most extreme case of the revolution devouring its own? Most scholars agree that what started as an expression of Stalin's paranoia – or his possibly well-founded apprehension that moderates in the Party wanted to cut him down a peg – then metastasized into something else, a phenomenon that some have termed a "third revolution," or the third main stage of the vast but interconnected "revolutionary" forces that were unleashed in 1917. It is difficult to believe that Stalin actually intended all that developed after the Kirov assassination, even if his ultimate responsibility is beyond reasonable doubt. Among the more interesting line of analysis of the Blood Purges has suggested that there was a perverse rationality to them, in that they provided a welcome release of building pressures in Soviet state and society: Conflicts among ruling elites were settled, and opportunities for upward mobility were provided. Those who have perceived a peculiar dynamic in modern totalitarian states have suggested that regular purges are necessary when elections are meaningless and when entrenched bureaucrats come to exercise a stifling domination. Without purges such a country stagnates. Yet others have simply attributed the purges to the inherent evils of the Communist system of absolute power – in short, recalling Lord Acton's famous dictum that power tends to corrupt and absolute power to corrupt absolutely.

1939: The Balance Sheet: Paradoxes and Imponderables

Before 1914, many of those favorable to the concept of social revolution worried over the dilemmas of ends and means: Could a relatively short period of violence be justified if it put an end to centuries of social injustice and human suffering? Even those who believed that violence could be justified nonetheless had to ask themselves what would happen were the intended short period of violence to get out of hand or to lengthen into many years. And what if it failed to bring social justice?

The price paid in World War I for defending what was perceived as national interests was staggering – finally incalculable – but an even greater price was paid for the “achievement of socialism” through the devices of Communism in Soviet Russia – all the more so if one includes the tens of millions who later perished under Communist rule in China, Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Soviet Communism continued to have its admirers in Europe in the interwar period, but it also earned an abiding fear. That fear, in its Italian and German varieties, took on particularly menacing dimensions, culminating in yet another world war, itself spawning yet more mass murder.

Further Reading

The scholarly literature devoted to Stalin, impressive even before Soviet archives were opened to Western scholars, now counts a number of recent additions, prominent among them Simon Sebag Montefiore’s *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (2005) and *Young Stalin* (2007). Earlier but still highly informative are Robert C. Tucker’s *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929* (1973) and *Stalin in Power, 1928–1941* (1992). (See also Chapter 23.) For a sense of “history from below” in the 1930s, see Sheila Fitzpatrick’s *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* (2008).

18 The Rise of Fascism and Nazism

1919–39

The appeals of Communism in western and central Europe derived in part from the failed aspirations of the prewar socialist parties, but they were reinforced most of all by the success of the Bolsheviks in taking and retaining power in the former Russian Empire. In their origins both Communism and Fascism may be seen as products of the many failures of the democratic left. Communism may be termed an extreme left-wing product, Fascism an extreme right-wing product, with the added obvious factor that fear of Communism was central to the appeals of Fascism.

As described in Chapter 14 and Chapter 17, revolution failed to spread out of Russia after 1917. Yet Communist rule in Russia, with its promise to spread revolution to all corners of the world, intensified existing anxieties about the program of the extreme left everywhere, whether Bolshevik-inspired or more indigenous. In his first decade of rule (1922–32), Mussolini was in fact popular with conservatives outside Italy, Winston Churchill among them. Hitler, too, was initially looked on with favor by many conservatives, inside Germany and in other countries (including Churchill, until the mid-1930s), as an alternative to left-wing rule, whether social-democratic or Communist.

The most decisive factor of all in strengthening the radical right was the depression that began in late 1929. Coalitions of either the left or right in Germany were unable to deal effectively with it, leading to the assumption of power by the Nazis in late January 1933, a turn of events with far greater implications than Mussolini's takeover in Italy.

The Origins of Italian Fascism

In the early 1920s, Fascism was at first perceived as deriving from specifically Italian conditions, like the word itself, rather than being the forerunner of an international movement. Parliamentary democracy had never been strong in Italy; its nearly complete paralysis, leading to Mussolini's becoming prime minister in 1922, at first evoked little alarm in other countries, largely because it was by no means obvious what he and his movement represented. Moreover, at first Mussolini's party was small, and Italy was not considered a major power.

Arriving at a satisfactory definition of Fascism has been much complicated by the fact that between 1919 and 1939 its Italian vanguard party underwent a substantial transformation, puzzling and confounding many observers. It appeared a work in progress, opportunistically mixing a hodgepodge of low resentments and soaring rhetoric, right-wing and left-wing – so much so that its status as a coherent ideology in the nineteenth-century sense was widely doubted. However, the element of the mix that gained the widest and most lasting interest was the Italian Fascist movement's successful crushing of the revolutionary left. The Italian Socialist Party, or PSI, was viewed as one of the most revolutionary in Europe; its split into pro- and non-Communist factions in early 1921 obviously weakened the socialist left but did little at the time to alleviate the alarms of Italy's property-owning classes about the dangers of social revolution. The new Italian Communist Party, or PCI, by embracing Bolshevism as a model, tended if anything to aggravate those alarms, by suggesting that Russian barbarism was being exported.

Because the term "Fascism" eventually took on such a range of morally offensive connotations, it is often overlooked that many of those initially attracted to it were idealists, inclined to excuse its brutal methods because Bolshevism seemed to represent a more radical moral evil – a movement that had broken with both Christian morality and Enlightened values in its open embrace of terrorism, atheism, and despotic rule by a self-appointed elite. Panicked property owners, large and small, were galvanized by the chaotic lower-class unrest in the *biennio rosso*, the "red two years" of 1919 and 1920. Millions of ordinary citizens in Italy, by no means all cynical or reactionary plutocrats, saw a threat not only to their material possessions but also to their personal safety and religious beliefs.

The alarms about violent social revolution often meshed with issues of Italian national pride. Italian patriotism had been profoundly offended by the war and the post-war settlements, not only by the humiliations on the battlefield but also by the rejection at the Paris Peace Conference of Italy's claims to the full spoils of victory. Since the days of Italy's less-than-inspiring achievement of national unity in the mid-eighteenth century, Italians had suffered from the disdain of other Europeans. Historian Alan Cassels has argued that a large part of Italy's nineteenth- and twentieth-century woes were connected to the Italians' lingering "inferiority complex."

Mussolini's Assumption of Power

Mussolini eventually proved himself adept at tapping those alarms and resentments, but in his first year as prime minister he moved with caution, trying to appear reasonable and respectable while struggling to gain better control of his own movement's hostile factions.

Mussolini's initial assumption of formal political power, in short, had little about it that was revolutionary; even the Fascist "March on Rome" in the early autumn of 1922 was more propaganda than reality. Mussolini's becoming prime minister was based on backstage political maneuvering, not a storming of the barricades, although undoubtedly the threat of escalating Fascist violence played an important role in that political maneuvering.

That Italy had reached a point of political stalemate by late 1922 was of central importance. The two largest parties to emerge in the immediate postwar election, the PSI and the new Catholic Populist Party (known as the Popolari), refused to work together in parliament. They actually agreed on many issues of short-term social and economic reform but were bitterly divided over the issue of Catholic religion. Appointing Mussolini as prime minister was a long shot in terms of resolving the stalemate, but finally the Italian king, Victor Emmanuel III, succumbed to advice from many quarters to appoint Mussolini, even though the Fascist Party at that point had only thirty-five deputies out of 535 in parliament.

Mussolini's assumption of political power had one revealing similarity to the Bolsheviks' victory: Both came after other parties had failed to offer effective rule. Mussolini's becoming prime minister similarly had far more to do with the faulty calculations of those in power than with the strength of the Fascist movement itself. A related similarity with the situation in Russia was that few observers expected either Lenin or Mussolini to last long. Many concluded that the Fascists and Bolsheviks so lacked practical political experience that they could not possibly succeed in ruling a major nation for very long. Some thus concluded that it would be wiser to let Mussolini and his party reveal their incompetence than risk bloodshed to fight them.

The differences between the situations in Italy and Russia were nonetheless major. The breakdown of authority in Russia, first tsarist and then liberal-democratic, was incomparably more complete. The Bolsheviks were doctrinaire Marxists intent on the obliteration of established social and economic relations, whereas in 1922 Mussolini's long-range intent was uncertain. Still, most of those who supported his becoming prime minister were committed to preserving the existing social and economic order, not overturning it. The Bolsheviks had violently routed Kerensky's Provisional Government and then refused to accept the results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly. Mussolini became prime minister legally, appointed by the king and not opposed by the existing defenders of order, including the police and military.

Many of those supporting Mussolini were convinced that, even if he did not actually make a fool of himself, he would simply be "transformed" by the conventions of Italian parliamentary life. (The Italian term *trasformismo* had been used since the 1870s to describe the country's corrupt parliamentary wheeling and dealing.) Some observers were impressed by Fascism's energy and dynamism, its potential for decisive action, epitomized by the so-called *squadristi*, the Fascist Party's paramilitary units (also called Black Shirts, recalling Garibaldi's Red Shirts). Many of the *squadristi* had served in elite commando units (termed *arditi* or "fearless ones") during the war. After the war they had launched a reign of terror in the northeastern part of Italy. In a number of towns they exercised de facto rule by late 1922, violently pushing aside the legally elected local governments. No responsible national government could allow the *squadristi* to continue their rampages, but no politician seemed courageous or strong enough to face them down – which was one of the reasons that the king finally turned to Mussolini.

Once Mussolini had assumed formal political power, the *squadristi* in fact stepped up their agitation, calling for a “second revolution,” a term that came to be used widely in the interwar years, on both the left and right. As used by the *squadristi*, it did not involve a social revolution in the Marxist sense but rather something vaguer and less ideological – beginning with a purge of decadent “bourgeois” office-holders and then replacing Italy’s dysfunctional parliamentary system with an authoritarian regime. Hitler’s followers would speak in comparable terms.

The Evolving Definition of Fascism: Initial Relations with Nazism

The mystique of a second revolution connected with Mussolini’s claims that he headed a genuinely new movement, breaking with a detested past and with worn-out ideologies. Such claims appealed especially to the young. In 1919, Lenin had revived the term “Communist” to stress his return to the revolutionary spirit of Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*. Mussolini made no claims to be returning to an idealized orthodoxy but instead coined a new term, *fascista*, for new times and new needs. He mocked formal ideologies, especially those of the left, as overly intellectual. He called for less talk and more action – a call that in Italy had a particular appeal, given the tendency of its politicians to engage in flowery oratory with little follow-through. Mussolini declared that “to live is not to contemplate but to act!”

The term Mussolini coined came with a cluster of connotations. *Fascio* as used in Italian at that time meant “group” or “band,” as in the *fasci italiani di combattimento* (Italian combat groups) that were initially formed by Mussolini in 1919, but the term was also transparently related to the ancient Roman *fascēs*, symbols of a stern Roman authority. *Fascista*, then, carried a dual message, both anti-individualist (“groupist”) and authoritarian. The growing emphasis on Mussolini as charismatic leader (*Duce*) also connected to right-wing traditions. When Mussolini was once asked to define Fascism, he replied “I am Fascism!” On other occasions he claimed to have incorporated into Fascist doctrine the ideas of prewar anti-positivists such as Sorel and Nietzsche, but he also made admiring remarks about Lenin and Trotsky because of their revolutionary audacity: their breaking free of prewar, overly deterministic Marxist theory.

Mussolini’s personal history also suggested clashing symbolisms and associations. He was of lower-class origin, the son of a village blacksmith. In the prewar Italian socialist movement Mussolini had been known for his fiery oratory as leader of its revolutionary left. But in early 1915 he broke dramatically with the PSI’s policy of neither supporting nor actively opposing the war and declared himself in favor of Italy’s entering the war on the side of the Entente. This betrayal resulted in Mussolini’s being expelled from the party. He thereafter served at the front, where he was wounded, returning then to journalistic activity in support of the war. He developed close associations with other veterans of the front, and with wealthy businessmen, antisocialist politicians, and ardent nationalists. Still, he did not completely disassociate himself from his origins and long-held socialist ideals; for a number of years he tried, mostly in vain, to wean Italy’s organized working class away from the Socialist and Communist parties.

In early 1919, when the Fascist movement was officially founded (becoming a formal political party in late 1921), its program contained many leftist elements, including several that were particularly contrary to what Fascism eventually came to represent (e.g., a clause in support of women's suffrage and another in favor of heavy taxation of the rich). During the first decade of the Fascist movement's existence, Mussolini often denounced racism and especially antisemitism as being entirely contrary to Italian traditions. At any rate, what the Fascists became best known for was not the details of their program but their action in violent clashes with the PSI and its associated organizations (unions, newspapers, cooperatives), clashes in which the Fascists usually emerged victorious.

Over that first decade, Fascism evolved from being a vaguely antiestablishment movement, leftist but also nationalist, into one ever more linked to right-wing causes and supported by wealthy donors. By 1929 much of the 1919 program had been implicitly abandoned. By 1939 the changes in the Fascist movement were even more extensive, involving an alliance with Nazism and the introduction of antisemitic legislation in 1938. In his first year as prime minister, however, Mussolini's options were limited. He headed a patched-together parliamentary coalition of right-center parties. Only four Fascists held cabinet posts out of a total of fourteen, although Mussolini himself assumed the posts of foreign minister and minister of the interior, as well as prime minister. From late 1922 until the elections of April 1924, he gained credence for himself and prestige for his party. In those elections, the Fascist Party won 275 seats in parliament out of 535, and the electoral coalition of which the Fascists were a part won 374 seats. The elections were no model of liberal-democratic procedure, but neither were they as blatantly rigged as would later be the case.

Mussolini seemed to have been given a green light to put his full program into action – whatever it was. However, he soon faced a major crisis, known as the Matteotti Affair. In June 1924, the Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti, famous for his stinging criticism of the Fascists, suddenly disappeared and was later found murdered. Evidence soon pointed to one of Mussolini's lieutenants as being responsible for the crime. Mussolini's own role remains debated to this day, but both the political left and right in Italy expressed disgust; even some prominent Fascists were concerned about whether their Duce could control the semicriminal elements among his followers. In defending himself, Mussolini seemed shaken and uncharacteristically hesitant.

However, he regained his composure, and in the process concluded that if he was to survive he needed to gather much more power into his hands. He began issuing decrees that moved Italy toward being a one-party or "totalitarian" state. (The term he introduced, *totalitario*, began to be used by both his supporters and his critics.) By 1926, the Fascist Party stood as the only legal party; many of the leaders of the other parties had been arrested or had fled into exile. Mussolini's destruction of parliamentary democracy did not seem to trouble most of his admirers, inside or outside Italy. On the contrary, tourists returning from the country reported that Fascist rule had restored order and that – miracle of miracles in Italy – "the trains run on time!". Winston Churchill, in visiting Italy in 1927, showered Mussolini with praise ("Duce, if I had been Italian, I am sure that I would have been wholeheartedly with you from start to finish against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism!").

At this point, relations between Italian Fascism and German Nazism were frosty, especially from the Italian side. Leading Fascists made no secret of their belief that Hitler's movement represented a form of modern barbarism, repellent to the Italians, a people of ancient civilization. Over 200 Jews had participated in the Fascist March on Rome in 1922, and a number of Jews had been appointed to prominent positions in the Fascist government. Wealthy Jewish businessmen and landowners in Italy were prominent among Fascism's supporters, including the husband of Mussolini's long-time Jewish mistress and official biographer, Margherita Sarfatti. And, even though termed *totalitario*, Fascist rule was not totalitarian in the sense that the term later came to suggest, since the Italian king retained significant independent powers, as did the senate and a number of other institutions, including the military. In the late 1920s, moreover, the relationship between Fascism and Nazism was not one of equals: Mussolini had become a world-famous figure, whereas Hitler was the often-ridiculed leader of a small fringe party. Mussolini did not respond to Hitler's efforts to make contact with him.

The Spread of Fascism Outside Italy, 1922–33

The decade following Mussolini's ascent to power saw the proliferation of movements and parties throughout Europe that claimed inspiration from Fascist Italy. Each differed from the Italian model in ways that reflected national peculiarities, but all expressed an angry disgust with previously established institutions and ideals. Most exhibited a taste for uniforms and a talent for symbols and slogans, music, marching, and pageantry. Most of those claiming to be inspired by Mussolini were more prone than he to expressing racist attitudes, and most were antisemitic, though not all. An obvious exception was Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a leader of the right-wing Zionists. Jabotinsky copied Mussolini's oratorical style and openly embraced Fascist organizing techniques, though his efforts to establish personal contacts with Mussolini were no more successful than were Hitler's. Not surprisingly, left-wing Zionists detested Jabotinsky, much as other leftists detested Fascists.

Most admirers of Italian Fascism built upon the prewar anti-positivist and populist tendencies in their own countries. Anti-Communism was a major theme, as was denouncing the link between Jews and Communism. After 1929, Fascist sympathizers commonly blamed Jews involved in finance for the world economic crisis, but more generally Jews on both the left and right were described as members of a destructive race, undermining the nations in which they lived. After the Balfour Declaration, a number of right-wing leaders came to favor the Zionist project, insofar as it advocated moving Jews from Europe and sending them to Palestine.

Only a few of those who explicitly imitated Mussolini's movement adopted the name "Fascist." By the mid-1920s the term had already become a political football, widely used as a negative epithet by the left. Marxists in particular denounced fascism as a device of capitalism in crisis. As early as 1922, Adolf Hitler was described by one of his followers as a "German Mussolini," and Hitler, from the beginning to the last days of his career, expressed admiration for Mussolini and Italian Fascism. He nonetheless retained the name adopted in 1922, "National Socialist German Worker Party," or Nazi (from the German pronunciation of the first two syllables of *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, or NSDAP).

The nature of the relationship between Hitler's and Mussolini's movements remained murky well into the 1930s. In a conversation with the Austrian ambassador to Italy in 1932, Mussolini expressed his belief that, since Jews exercised so much influence everywhere, "it is better to leave them alone. Hitler's antisemitism has already brought him more enemies than is necessary." Even by 1934, after Hitler had taken power in Germany, Mussolini's personal encounter with the new Führer left him distinctly unimpressed. He privately ridiculed Hitler as resembling "a phonograph record with only seven tunes," played over and over.

Remarkably, the derision expressed by Mussolini and other leading Fascists did not seem to anger or alienate Hitler. It is unclear how much he knew of their hostile remarks, but some almost certainly reached him. What he made of Mussolini's Jewish financial supporters, advisers, and Fascist party members – to say nothing of the Italian leader's Jewish mistress (and earlier romances with Jewish women) – remains a mystery. The puzzles about Hitler's inner convictions are many, but his thoughts about the role of Jews in the Italian Fascist movement must remain among the most elusive.

In Spain, where liberal-democratic institutions were even weaker than in Italy and where there had also been violent lower-class unrest toward the end of the war, General Miguel Primo de Rivera staged a military takeover in September 1923. He was then named prime minister by King Alfonso XIII, who hoped to lend legitimacy to the coup, a little less than a year after Mussolini had been named prime minister by Italy's king. Primo de Rivera was another figure who made highly favorable comments about Italian Fascism without actually declaring himself a Fascist. He spoke of initiating a large-scale program of public works, as Mussolini was doing, as a way to modernize Spain and help the laboring masses. The Spanish leader's attitude to Jews was, like Mussolini's at this point, generally positive; he even took steps to grant citizenship to Jews of Spanish origin, welcoming back those (the Sephardim) who had been expelled from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century.

It was soon obvious, however, that Primo de Rivera lacked Mussolini's political agility. He was an able orator and in other ways an attractive, colorful personality, but he was never able to generate the kind of broad support that Mussolini did. A military man from the landed aristocracy, he was more tied to established elites than Mussolini and showed less success in managing them, especially the generals and ruling hierarchy of the Church. Thus, while Mussolini gained in power and popularity in the late 1920s, Primo de Rivera experienced growing frustration. He finally resigned, dying in exile a few months after leaving Spain, in 1930. His son, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, formed an organization, the Falange, with clearer connections to the Italian model but still substantially different from it. He later allied with General Francisco Franco, a traditional monarchist who was widely considered a Fascist, during the Spanish Civil War in 1936–9 (further discussed in Chapter 19).

In the Austrian republic, the leaders of the Christian Social Party looked with favor upon neighboring Fascist Italy, to the extent of their being unofficially termed "clerico-Fascists" or "Austro-Fascists." For them a large point in Mussolini's favor was his signing of the Lateran Accords (or Concordat) of 1929, which established a truce in the long-standing hostility of the papacy and the Italian state. But the most important attraction of Fascism for the leaders of the Christian Social Party was Mussolini's destruction of the Marxist left, since in Austria the Social Democrat Party was the main opponent of

the Christian Socials; the two came to bloody clashes in Vienna in early 1934. The victory of the Christian Socials in these clashes meant that they could claim, like the Fascists in Italy, to have destroyed godless Marxism.

However much the Austrian clerico-Fascists resembled the Italian Fascists, their embrace of Catholic religion got in the way of a more complete imitation. Mussolini's Concordat with the papacy was transparently opportunistic; he and many of his lieutenants had earlier been known for their anti-Catholicism. Interestingly, the Austrian Christian Socials in power not only sought to destroy the Marxists but were also determined opponents of the "pagan" Austrian Nazi Party, outlawing it in 1933. Nazi conspirators then murdered the Christian Social chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss, in 1934. The Austrian case underlines the point that, although Marxists considered Nazism to be a variety of Fascism, the differences between Italian Fascism and German Nazism remained substantial up to the mid-1930s. Many of those who admired Mussolini expressed a pronounced revulsion for Hitler and Nazi racism.

Nazism: The Basis of Its Appeal

The question of how the Nazis, once so marginal, came to power has fascinated and haunted historians of Europe. Even more, what the Nazis did with that power – acts of unspeakable cruelty and mass murder – has been scrutinized by many impressive works of history. The issue has not been so much that human beings did such things, since human beings had committed acts of grotesque cruelty and mass murder throughout history. The issue has rather been how such things occurred in a nation widely considered to be among Europe's most highly educated and civilized. (That even greater cruelty and mass murder over a longer period occurred in Communist Russia was less surprising, in part because Russia was considered a less civilized area.) The Nazi years are often described as a time of insanity, when criminals somehow gained control of a modern nation. There was no doubt much that seems insane in both the Nazi and the Communist regimes, but that description is inadequate if only because it brushes off the need for serious and open-minded analysis, while putting a comfortable distance between the insane "them" and the normal "us."

Nazi Germany became considerably more powerful, thus both more threatening and more attractive, than Fascist Italy. In contrast to Mussolini's open disdain for formal ideology, Hitler claimed to take Nazi ideology seriously (even if he often privately mocked the writings of the party's official ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg). He never formally changed the original Nazi Party program of 1921, although he eventually ignored large parts of it. His interpretation of those parts dealing with the Jews was the source of endless speculation throughout the 1920s and 1930s, since he blew hot and cold on the topic, both in public and in private. He did, however, openly recognize a change in his approach to gaining power. The failure of the so-called Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923 persuaded him that he needed to come to power through legal means, which implied winning over a majority of Germany's population in free elections. Hitler came to understand that this goal required him to appear more moderate, which in turn meant learning how to say what various audiences wanted to hear, even if that contradicted what he said to other audiences.

Emerging from prison in 1925, Hitler diligently worked on polishing his oratory. He toned down his radical rhetoric, especially when speaking to audiences (such as academics, religious leaders, or businessmen) that were put off by talk of revolution and by racist rabble-rousing. His softening of tone in the late 1920s in regard to the Jews was widely commented upon, so much so that Erich Ludendorff, the celebrated general who had allied with Hitler in the 1923 Putsch, publicly accused him in 1928 of betraying the antisemitic cause. Hitler scarcely resisted the charge, commenting that “law-abiding Jews” had nothing to fear from the Nazi movement.

So long as Germany remained prosperous, Hitler remained on the margins of the country’s political life, but he and his party did make some progress in the late 1920s. The party grew from 27,000 members in 1925 to 108,000 in 1928, and Hitler solidified his position as leader, or *Führer*, within the party. The 1920s also saw the reorganization of the German Communist Party around a strong, charismatic leader, Ernst Thälmann. Both parties, then, were poised for action once “objective conditions” changed.

The Depression, as noted, a powerful symbol of failed liberal democracy and capitalism, was crucial in transforming the Nazi Party into Germany’s largest, finally passing both the SPD and the Center Party in the popular vote. Without that economic collapse, Hitler and his movement would almost certainly have remained a footnote in modern history. Germany was hit by the Depression with devastating force, resulting in massive unemployment. The Weimar Republic’s leaders proved unable to offer effective remedies, and, in the increasingly chaotic period from the autumn of 1929 to early 1932, the electoral support of the NSDAP rose from around 2 percent of the popular vote to 37 percent, in the process attracting many who were voting for the first time. The NSDAP was better organized and enjoyed much more extensive popular support by early 1933 than either the Bolsheviks or Fascists when they first assumed political power. Hitler’s spell-binding oratory, and his ability to tap the emotions of a profoundly troubled population and draw to him personally an adoring, unquestioning fidelity, was obviously of central importance. However, the Nazis never won a national majority in any free election, nor did they win in any large city. Their strength was in the countryside and in small and medium-sized towns, especially in the Protestant areas of Germany.

Between 1929 and 1932 the German Communist Party (KPD) also grew rapidly, and that growth tended to propel those who feared Communism toward its most ruthless enemies, the Nazis. In turn, Nazi growth pushed many previously “soft” leftists toward the only “hard” anti-Fascist party, the KPD, a perfect example of a vicious cycle.

The Nature of Hitler’s Antisemitism

It was long believed that antisemitism was fundamental to Nazi success, and, even more, to Hitler’s personal worldview. Similarly, many have argued that in Nazism pre-war antisemitism reached its logical culmination. Hatred of the Jews allegedly served as an irrational, pseudo-religious belief that pulled normally hostile groups together and blinded them to their own true interests: Worker and capitalist, religious and secular, northern and southern Germans; all allegedly found a sense of solidarity in their Aryan race, whereas the Jew served as the symbol of destructiveness, of the alien “other.”

Much about this picture remains plausible and no doubt true for parts of the population, but scholars in recent decades have cast doubt on the extent to which hatred of Jews acted as an emotional unifier of Germany's population. Much evidence suggests that antisemitism divided Germany's population as much as uniting it. As described in Chapter 9, political antisemitism before the war was a notable failure in Germany; even its "moderate" program of undoing the civil equality granted Jews in the nineteenth century never even came close to being passed by the Reichstag. Similarly, Mussolini's Fascism, Hitler's model, was a success in the 1920s when Mussolini explicitly and repeatedly rejected antisemitism – an especially interesting point insofar as Hitler described Mussolini and Fascism as his model. A number of detailed studies have presented evidence that most Nazi Party members did not place antisemitism among the most important reasons for joining the party; other issues, economic and nationalist, were more important, though of course they overlapped with antisemitism.

Perhaps the most persuasive point against the alleged emotionally binding or mystical power of antisemitism is that Hitler – the man who many describe as being able to read the minds of his audiences – himself did not believe it had such power. He toned down his own attacks on Jews in the late 1920s, since he concluded that radical antisemitism appealed to only a minority of Germans, while repelling many others that Hitler believed it necessary to attract. Once in power Hitler repeatedly made vague statements about how the Jewish Question was to be solved. The violent rhetoric of his earlier years was generally replaced by milder words suggesting the possibility of a moderate solution to the issue. Hitler was known to complain privately that the German people were incapable of understanding the seriousness of the Jewish danger and that therefore popular consent to radical anti-Jewish measures was not to be expected.

At any rate, by late 1938 those who hoped that Hitler actually believed in a moderate solution were obliged to recognize that such hopes were in vain. When war broke out in 1939, violent solutions became far more easily implemented. Still, the Final Solution – the most radical and violent of all possible solutions – was never openly announced by Hitler (though he did make dark if vague threats in on a number of occasions). In fact, the Final Solution was kept a strictly guarded secret to the end, in implicit recognition that it would not gain popular approval.

A contentious literature has evolved around the origins, nature, and evolution of Hitler's personal beliefs about Jews. Discussions about "what Hitler really meant" differ in nature from those about "what Marx really meant," but both have much to do with the often imprecise and shifting statements, public and private, made by both Hitler and Marx. Hitler's various accounts of his earliest personal contacts with Jews, in his autobiographical *Mein Kampf* (1925) but also in various private conversations, left out some highly significant details. Scholars have uncovered intriguing evidence of friendly contacts with Jews before 1919, as well as expressions by Hitler of respect for a number of Jewish individuals. *Mein Kampf* alludes occasionally to positive impressions – he admired Jewish artists, especially musicians, in Vienna – although his negative impressions are presented amply and quite graphically.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler describes a moment of truth for him, when he realized that Jews were an alien race rather than a religious community. That was hardly a novel conclusion, since it was a principal theme of the antisemites of the 1880s. However, Hitler did not even mention Wilhelm Marr or other well-known theorists of antisemitism before 1914. The man whom he credited with having exercised a major intellectual influence, the "fatherly

friend” he met when he moved from Vienna to Munich in 1913, was Dietrich Eckart, a bohemian artist largely unknown to the wider world. However, this friend’s descriptions of Jews differed from the crudely biological ones for which Hitler and Nazism later became notorious. Eckart certainly did consider Jews to be materialistic and destructive, but he also believed that such tendencies exist in all peoples, even in the much more highly spiritual and creative Aryans. Some degree of Jewishness, Eckart concluded, was necessary for any nation to survive. Mass murder was certainly not Eckart’s solution to the Jewish Question; he stressed instead that a spiritual inner struggle by Aryans was necessary to free themselves from Jewish materialistic tendencies, not violence toward Jews.

Hitler had contact with many other varieties of antisemites in these prewar years, but his own account of them does not allow for confident conclusions about what he actually came to believe, if indeed he had arrived at precise conclusions. The point at which a “final” solution was accepted by Hitler may never be known with certainty, but much evidence suggests that it was not until World War II was well underway. In the 1920s Hitler lacked the power to put his ideas – whatever they actually were – into practice. Even as his power grew enormously in the 1930s, he apparently remained open to various concrete options, though almost certainly none that were genuinely “moderate” or that Jews themselves would welcome. That he often referred to himself as “fanatical” is revealing.

The debate among scholars over Hitler’s intentions in regard to the Jews (termed the “intentionalist–functionalist debate”) resemble discussions in the 1920s and 1930s about whether Hitler’s antisemitism was “sincere” (reflecting a genuine hatred) or “insincere” (demagogic and opportunist). Those terms became familiar in the prewar years in application to another man whom Hitler described admiringly in *Mein Kampf*: Karl Lueger, the immensely popular mayor of Vienna during the years that Hitler lived there. Although Lueger at times attacked Jews viciously, he retained Jewish advisers and personal friends, and, for all his rhetorical bluster, finally did little to harm to Vienna’s Jewish population. In fact, Jews continued to move in great numbers into Vienna while he was mayor. When asked about how he could reconcile his hostile words with his friendly Jewish contacts, he quipped, “I decide who is a Jew!” (a phrase later picked up by Hermann Goering, the official number-two figure in the Nazi Reich, who also had a number of friendly Jewish contacts).

The conclusion that Hitler was opportunistic (or insincere) in regard to the Jewish Question is consistent with the view of him as politically agile, intellectually shallow, and concerned primarily with acquiring power. In most of his major political decisions he moved in reaction to opportunities that he could not have foreseen and that at times seemed contrary to his stated ideological commitments. In this implicit taste for opportune action, Hitler could be said to have resembled both Mussolini and Lenin. That taste was never more obvious than in the way that Hitler became chancellor in January 1933. Ian Kershaw, in his acclaimed biography of Hitler, observes that “In bringing Hitler to power, chance events and conservative miscalculation played a larger role than any actions by the Nazi leader himself.”

Hitler in Power

Hitler came to power legally, if in deeply troubled times, as was the case with Mussolini, invited by conservative power brokers who thought they could manipulate him to protect their own interests. However, Hitler enjoyed a much broader electoral support by



Figure 18.1 Adolf Hitler, September 1936. The business suit reflects his efforts at this time to appear as a respectable statesman, not a radical demagogue. *Source:* © ullsteinbild / TopFoto.co.uk.

the early 1930s than Mussolini had in the early 1920s, and an even greater national turmoil prevailed in Germany than had in Italy. From late 1929 to early 1932, in an exhausting series of hard-fought elections, it seemed that Hitler's once-marginal party was heading toward winning an absolute majority, something that Hitler and other party leaders loudly predicted. But, in the elections of November 1932, the popular vote for the NSDAP abruptly dropped from 37 percent to 33 percent of the total. Although this was hardly a collapse, it suggested that support for Hitler's party had reached its limit. Many viewed this setback as the beginning of the end for Hitler and Nazism. His success was exposed as a flash in the pan; his demagoguery and the contradictory promises of his party were finally coming back to haunt him. The party's finances were exhausted, party morale was faltering, and internal factionalism mounting; thousands were leaving the party in disillusionment, and hundreds of thousands had ceased voting for it. When Hitler was then offered the post of chancellor in late January 1933, he accepted it, even though the conditions attached to the offer included a majority of non-Nazis in his cabinet, which he had earlier stated he would never accept.

Hitler was not “elected” chancellor, as has often been stated. Under the Weimar constitution chancellors were not popularly elected but rather were appointed by the president, on the basis of a presumed Reichstag majority of allied parties. The NSDAP had won only a third of the popular vote in the Weimar Republic’s last free elections. Hitler later became enormously popular, far more than his party ever was, but in early 1933 both he and his party faced widespread unease and suspicion – to say nothing of confident predictions that this preposterous Austrian corporal and his semicriminal cohort would soon be exposed as unfit to rule. The official line from Moscow went even further, proclaiming that Hitler’s appointment should be considered a source of satisfaction, since it reflected the utter desperation of the ruling elites – and the “death rattle” of German capitalism. The slogan the KPD took up at this point was “after Hitler us!” (*nach Hitler uns!*). Proletarian revolution was just around the corner.

The reality turned out to be quite different. In the months immediately following his appointment as chancellor, Hitler accomplished what it had taken Mussolini several years to do: the destruction of the revolutionary left, the elimination of other parties, and the establishment of a dictatorial, one-party state. But, again, rather than operating according to a detailed plan, Hitler time after time made snap decisions based on unforeseen events. He and his advisers were, for example, surprised and alarmed on February 27 by the news that the Reichstag building had been set on fire. Hitler even seemed on the edge of panic, since at first he had concluded that the fire was part of a Communist revolutionary counteroffensive. But he was able to turn the fire to Nazi advantage, using it as a pretext to crush the KPD. The elections that followed soon after, on March 5, with the KPD outlawed and a wave of anti-Communist alarm gripping Germany, gave the Nazis just under 44 percent of the popular vote. That was still not the absolute majority that Hitler had hoped for, but within a few weeks he was able to persuade the Catholic Center Party, the right-wing Nationalists, and the other remaining parties, except for the SPD, to vote for the so-called Enabling Act, which allowed Hitler to rule by decree for the next four years.

Hitler used those powers toward the goal of *Gleichschaltung* in Germany, roughly translated as “bringing into line” but more simply as “Nazification.” Formerly independent agencies of various sorts, private and public, were subordinated to Nazi rule. Although sometimes also called a Nazi revolution, *Gleichschaltung* was more gradual and formally legal, not a storming of the barricades. It did not involve any major attacks on property rights or a redistribution of income – not even a purge of the older state bureaucracies, except insofar as Jews had positions in them.

Still, more than a year after becoming chancellor, Hitler was not yet in “total” control. Moreover, he soon faced a major crisis, comparable to the Matteotti Affair in Italy. The turbulent and lawless elements of the Nazi Party were even more of an issue than they had been in the Fascist Party in 1924, and whether Hitler would be able to control them was even more crucial. The moment of truth for Hitler arrived in June 1934, in what became known as the “Night of the Long Knives.” It ranks as the most serious internal crisis faced by Hitler in his first years in office, with potent symbolism and far-reaching repercussions.

Just as Mussolini, after destroying Italy’s non-Fascist parties, still faced the king as an independent power, Hitler by early 1933 still faced a less-than-admiring President Hindenburg. More importantly, the leaders of Germany’s military elite viewed Hitler

and his movement with growing alarm, which constituted a greater concern for Hitler than his frosty relations with Hindenburg. A related and often unappreciated point is how much Hitler in his first years relied upon the expertise of the established elites in most branches of the government, even if they were being “brought into line.” In truth, the previously mentioned belief by German elites that Hitler and his lieutenants were so lacking in experience that they were unfit to rule was not far off-base. The historian Hans Mommsen has observed that rarely if ever in modern history has a party been so unprepared for the complexities of ruling a major modern nation as was the Nazi Party in January 1933. Without the cooperation of those experienced elites, trained in the venerable Prussian state tradition, Nazi rule would have run into far greater difficulties than it did. (A comparable point has been made in regard to the German revolution of 1918, in that its social-democratic leaders felt obliged to rely upon those same elites, most crucially the military. Some historians have argued that this previous failure to purge the existing elites – efficient but also authoritarian – was crucial to the ultimate demise of the Weimar Republic.)

To term Hitler’s first year of rule as “cautious” may seem strange given his actions following the Reichstag fire, but there is little question that even after the passage of the Enabling Act he was acutely aware of the precariousness of his power. Among Hitler’s followers there was a simmering discontent, most importantly in the Nazis’ paramilitary arm, the so-called Brown Shirts or SA (*Sturmabteilungen* or “storm troopers”). *Gleichschaltung* seemed to them too slow and compromising, and their leader, Ernst Röhm, had begun to agitate for the incorporation and subordination of the professional *Reichswehr* (armed forces) into the “people’s army” of the Brown Shirts. The *Reichswehr* had been limited to 100,000 members by the terms of the Versailles Treaty, whereas the SA by 1934 was millions strong. Open warfare between the old army and the new threatened.

Hitler understood that the old-line generals would never accept being subordinated to the likes of Röhm (notorious not only for his corruption but also for his homosexuality). Those generals moreover let Hitler know that, if he expected support from the military in his announced plans to take over the presidency once Hindenburg retired or died (he was eighty-six years old in 1934 and in poor health), he would have to exercise greater control over the Brown Shirts. Hitler finally did so – in spades. Charging that Röhm and the SA were planning a violent takeover, he turned to the elite corps that had started out as his personal bodyguard, the black-shirted SS (*Schutzstaffel*, literally “protection brigade”), but was rapidly becoming a major power in the Third Reich. The leader of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, was one of Röhm’s bitterest rivals. Beginning on the evening of June 30, 1934, SS units murdered Röhm and several hundred others, including a few who had nothing to do with the Brown Shirts but who were, for one reason or another, on Hitler’s enemy list.

By conducting a ruthless blood purge of those known as “old fighters” – long-time Nazis, many of whom were considered among his closest personal friends – Hitler accomplished much more than is often recognized. The butchery no doubt disturbed some, but others were jubilant: Hitler received accolades from many quarters, not surprisingly from the leaders of the *Reichswehr* but also from Hindenburg, from prominent figures in business and finance, and even from some religious leaders. Their enthusiasm

was based on the belief that ruthless action by Hitler was amply justified, since it headed off the civil war that was looming in Germany. Such a war would almost certainly have incurred more than the several hundred deaths of the Night of the Long Knives. His supporters concluded that Hitler had dealt with the Brown Shirts as he had dealt with the Communists, using violence to prevent greater violence. Other opponents of the regime could hardly miss an additional point – that Hitler could be utterly pitiless when he felt it necessary to be, even in dealing with his own followers.

A Moderate Solution to the Jewish Question?

The purge of the SA leadership had little about it explicitly pertaining to Jews, but the rowdier acts of anti-Jewish violence in previous years had often been associated with the Brown Shirts. Moreover, explicitly on their agenda was the takeover of what they claimed was ill-gotten Jewish wealth and property. However, attacking the principle of private property, even Jewish private property, alarmed many who otherwise looked on the Nazis with favor. For many of them, Hitler appeared as the necessary iron-willed statesman in times of crisis, doing the unpleasant but essential work of destroying radicals on the left and the right in order to save Germany, protect property rights, and assure safety on the streets.

Many were thus inclined to view the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935 in the same spirit. These laws have plausibly been described as another step in an escalating antisemitic program in Nazi Germany, stripping Jews of civil equality and outlawing sexual relations between them and Aryan Germans. However, many Germans, even some Jews, saw the laws as a statesman-like move by Hitler, designed to calm rather than intensify hatred of Jews.

In retrospect, such perceptions appear illusory, but they were exactly what Hitler hoped to encourage: In a speech defending the laws, he reported that he had been given drafts of more drastic legislation by experts from the Ministry of the Interior, but he had decided upon the most moderate of the drafts. He furthermore expressed the hope that with the passage of these laws “the German people might be able to find a tolerable relationship with the Jewish people.” He stressed the importance of obeying the law and avoiding violence. He concluded with the remark that this would be his “last word on the Jewish Question.”

The roughly four-year period from June 30, 1934, until March of 1938 (from the Röhm purge to the Nazi takeover of Austria) may be considered the high point for Hitler and the Nazi regime, their golden years of growing prestige and apparent economic recovery. In the summer of 1936, Nazi Germany hosted the Olympics in Berlin with great fanfare. Tourists returned from the games with high praise for the new regime. Few reported witnessing any persecution of Jews. While most of the rest of the industrialized world remained mired in the Depression, politically fractured and torn by strikes and street violence, Nazi Germany seemed to be prospering economically, its people united behind their beloved Führer. German athletes won eighty-nine medals in the Berlin Olympics, more than any other country (US: fifty-six; France: nineteen; Britain fourteen).

Nazi and Soviet Rule: Comparing Evils

For many observers, up to 1938 Communism loomed as an incomparably greater evil than Nazism. The Nazi regime could be held responsible for hundreds of deaths – at the most several thousand – whereas the Soviet regime had overseen the deaths of millions. There was a comparably vast difference in the numbers imprisoned in concentration camps; slave labor had become a major part of the Soviet economy by that time, but it did not become so in Nazi Germany until after 1939.

Many observers in the western democracies described themselves as “caught between two evils,” between two totalitarian powers, each claiming to be the voice of the future. Leftists in the west tended to sympathize with the Soviet Union, right-wingers with Nazi Germany. Moderates were inclined to hope that the two totalitarian powers would ultimately destroy each other. But what actually happened in August 1939 stunned everyone: The Nazis and the Soviets signed a pact of non-aggression. The two totalitarian powers now stood as allies. To understand how that portentous reversal came to pass, the diplomatic developments of the 1930s need to be examined, which is the task of Chapter 19.

Further Reading

Engaging and concise introductions to the Italian scene can be found in Alan Cassels, *Fascist Italy* (1985) and Anthony L. Cardoza, *Mussolini: The First Fascist* (2006). Robert O. Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2005) is an ambitious and scholarly overview of the many varieties of Fascism beyond those in Italy and Germany.

There are more biographies of Hitler than of any individual in modern European history, with the possible exception of Napoleon. The generally accepted definitive ones are Ian Kershaw's *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris* (1998) and *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis* (2000). In 2010, Kershaw produced a relatively condensed (1000 pp.) one-volume edition (titled *Hitler: A Biography*) of the two earlier volumes (2000 pp.). Aside from Kershaw's books, particularly provocative new perspectives on Hitler include Birgitte Hamann's *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (2000) and Frederick Spotts's *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (2002).

Studies of the Holocaust have also appeared in great profusion (see the Further Reading sections of Chapter 19, Chapter 20, and Chapter 21); Kershaw's 2010 biography of Hitler provides references to much of the latest scholarship on the issue. Among the best, certainly one the most sober and cogent, of the earlier volumes is Michael Marrus's *The Holocaust in History* (2000; 1st ed. 1987), which explores a wide range of interpretations of the Holocaust. Offering a thought-provoking interpretation is Karl Schleunes's *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–39* (1990).

19 The Origins of World War II and the Holocaust

1929–39

Since Hitler's responsibility for World War II was much more obvious than that of Germany's leaders for World War I, the origins of World War II have not been studied with quite the same focus or in the same spirit as the origins of World War I. The controversy about the origins of World War II has been mostly about the appeasement of Hitler by France and England, an alleged naiveté or cowardice in confronting him. That charge blended, during the Cold War, into a oft-repeated lesson of history: "No compromise with totalitarian dictators!" Thus the diplomatic history of the interwar years, especially of the mid-to-late 1930s, cast a long shadow over the rest of the twentieth century.

Hitler's responsibility for the Holocaust appears even more obvious. The lessons of history in this instance have been no less passionately proclaimed ("Never again!" "Never compromise with antisemitism; never allow mass murder to take place, anywhere!"), and again have cast a long shadow.

European Diplomacy, 1929–34

France after 1919 constructed an alliance system (the Petite or Little Entente) with Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, and separately with Poland, designed to surround Germany, again "encircling" it. Germany too moved in the direction of prewar realpolitik in signing the Rapallo Treaty of 1922 with Soviet Russia, the other pariah state of the day. The terms of the Treaty stipulated that the two countries would normalize their diplomatic relations and "cooperate in a spirit of mutual goodwill in meeting the economic needs of both countries." Most other countries were scandalized,

suspecting (correctly) that a secret, more extensive diplomatic and military cooperation between the two countries was also being negotiated.

During the Locarno era (discussed in Chapter 16), from 1924 to 1929, tensions diminished and things began to look up; a remarkable economic recovery occurred in Germany and in nearly all countries. But the collapse of the stock market and the ensuing depression changed everything. In the Soviet Union, “everything” was already changing by early 1928, with the opening stages of the collectivization of agriculture and the five-year plan. Nonetheless, until early 1938 the national boundaries established by the Paris Peace Conference remained in place, with only minor exceptions.

Outraged nationalism was a staple of Hitler's oratory. One might say that he reopened the German Question in terms that recalled the 1840s, in that he vowed to achieve a *grossdeutsch* unification of those Germans left out of Bismarck's *kleindeutsch* Reich. Hitler's sense of the direction of German expansion, of *Lebensraum* (living space), was to the Slavic east, which connected to a nineteenth-century theme, though he added a cruder racial content. Still, the outraged public rhetoric of Hitler, the marginal, widely mocked demagogue, was one thing; the concrete reality of Hitler's foreign policy upon taking office was another. His first efforts as chancellor, at any rate, concentrated on domestic not foreign-policy issues. Hitler's non-Nazi foreign minister, a conservative who had served under the immediately preceding governments, Konstantin von Neurath, announced that under the new regime there would be “no experiments in foreign policy.”

In early 1933, Hitler presented himself to the world as a man of peace, proposing that other countries begin disarming with the goal of reaching Germany's level, but those countries refused to take his proposal seriously. Their refusal provided him with the pretext for withdrawing from the League of Nations and its associated Disarmament Conference in October 1933. Further embellishing his claim to be in favor of a reduction in tensions between nations, Hitler signed a non-aggression pact with Poland in January 1934 – an especially remarkable move in that the Polish Corridor through eastern Germany remained for most Germans the most bitterly resented territorial change of 1919. In January 1935, after a plebiscite in the Saar resulted in an overwhelming majority in favor of returning to German rule, Hitler announced that he had no further claims on France, implicitly accepting the permanence of France's reacquisition of Alsace-Lorraine. (The Saar was a small coal-rich region just south of Luxemburg that since 1920 had been administered by France and Britain as a League of Nations Mandate).

Throughout this period Hitler repeatedly returned to the theme that he, a veteran of trench warfare, knew well the horrors of war and was committed to preventing their recurrence. The initial tone of his foreign policy, then, could be seen as consonant with the “moderate” tone of his remarks after the passing of the Nuremberg Laws. And he used the same term, “rational,” in regard to foreign policy as he had in regard to the Jewish Question – that is, he was in favor of “rational” antisemitism (*Antisemitismus von Vernunft*). Many observers remained unconvinced, and retrospectively describing Hitler as rational seems ludicrous, but at the time many allowed themselves to be persuaded that Hitler, once saddled with the responsibilities of power, was in truth moving away from the radical rhetoric of his past and showing many signs of being a responsible statesman.

Another area of obvious foreign-policy tension was Germany's neighbor to the south-east, the Austrian republic. Before becoming chancellor, Hitler had openly spoken of his intention to incorporate Austria into the German Reich, but a union or *Anschluss* with Austria was forbidden by Article 80 of the Versailles Treaty. There were even more substantial obstacles to Hitler's stated intention. As noted previously, the hostility of the ruling Christian Socials in Austria to Nazism was much intensified by the murder of the Christian-Social chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss, in late July 1934, in a bungled effort by the Austrian Nazis to stage a putsch. The failure of that putsch and the ensuing round-up of Nazis was an embarrassment for Hitler. And things got quite a bit more embarrassing.

Mussolini had established good relations with the Christian Socials. Moreover, preventing the establishment of a strong German state on Italy's northern border had long been a key foreign-policy goal for Italian leaders. Mussolini moved 100,000 Italian troops to the Brenner Pass, on the Austro-Italian border, prepared to protect Christian Social rule if necessary. Hitler then backed down, disavowing the actions of the Austrian Nazis and ostensibly abandoning the project of uniting Germany and Austria.

Hitler's Retreats, the Stresa Front

In balance, then, although the year 1934 had marked dazzling victories for Hitler in domestic affairs, in foreign policy he was less successful. Retrospectively, of course, it seems clear that his proclaimed peaceful intentions were spurious and short-term. Hitler fully understood that the long-term foreign-policy goals he had outlined in *Mein Kampf* could not be achieved until Germany's military had been rebuilt, and he knew that goal would take some time, during which he needed to avoid foreign-policy tensions insofar as was possible.

However, even in domestic matters, Hitler had at times retreated in ways not often remembered in subsequent years. For example, he decided, once it became clear that there was little popular support for the planned massive boycott of Jewish stores in the spring of 1933, that the time for major action against the Jews had to be postponed. The boycott was changed to a single "symbolic" day, and in the immediately following years the subject of an anti-Jewish boycott largely disappeared from Hitler's speeches.

In March 1935 Hitler announced that Germany would begin rebuilding an air force (prohibited by the Versailles Treaty) and would be enlarging its ground forces to 500,000 (five times the limit imposed by the Treaty). In response, the prime ministers of France and Britain met in April in northern Italy and reached an agreement with Mussolini to establish what was informally termed the "Stresa Front." The three leaders vowed that in the future their countries would use military force to resist any further violations of the Versailles Treaty by Germany.

The Stresa Front was obviously not a coalition of liberal-democratic powers but rather one based on national interest, a bit like republican France's alliance with tsarist Russia before World War I. Fascist Italy, itself dictatorial and expansionist, had been the only country of the three to move troops against the Nazi threat to Austria's independence. The Stresa Front might have been described as *realpolitik* by French and British leaders—allying with a regime they recognized as evil to oppose a greater evil, a rising Nazi Germany. Similarly, men like Churchill supported Mussolini's dictatorship in large part because it had

proven effective in combating “the demonic passions of Bolshevism.” Hitler’s dictatorship and Germany’s rearmament suggested to some observers, Churchill most famously, that an even more threatening evil than Communism was now arising in Nazism.

Other internal developments in this period had far-reaching foreign-policy implications. In the early Depression years, the unstable and scandal-ridden French Third Republic was under siege, and frustrations with it reached a climax in what became known as the Stavisky Affair. Serge Stavisky had sold worthless bonds to the tune of millions of francs, and for years had bribed officials and parliamentarians to cover his activities. Stavisky was Jewish, and for the antirepublican, antisemitic right in France he epitomized all that was wrong with “Marianne” (the symbol of the Republic) – embraced and disgraced by unscrupulous Jews. After years of ineffective court proceedings, it seemed that Stavisky was finally being brought to justice, but in early January 1934, he was found dying of gunshot wounds, a suicide according to the police.

On February 6, 1934, a massive antirepublican demonstration was organized on the Place de la Concorde in Paris, rallying various right-wing groups, including those that were termed the “fascist leagues.” The demonstrators charged that Stavisky had in fact been murdered by the police in order to prevent his exposing the corruption of high-government officials. The demonstration turned into a bloody confrontation with the forces of order, resulting in seventeen dead and hundreds wounded, before the demonstration was crushed.

The reactionary right in France had up to this point not found a leader comparable in charisma and political adroitness to Mussolini or Hitler, although by 1934 Colonel François de la Rocque, of the Croix du feu (cross of fire), claimed a million recruits to his banners. His group was one of many “leagues” loosely termed fascist at this time in France. Many were closer to prewar right-wing antirepublican movements than to Italian Fascism or Nazism. De la Rocque favored military action against Nazi Germany, but many others on the right expressed admiration for the German and Italian dictators.

Most leftists in France perceived the riot of February 1934 as evidence of an ominously rising right-wing threat to the republic. The long history of insurrections in Paris made it easy to believe that antirepublican conspirators had actually planned to seize power. Little evidence of such a conspiracy has emerged since then, but, nonetheless, at the time it became a firm belief on the Marxist left that a “fascist” coup d’état had been narrowly averted. The success of such a coup would have meant that right-wing antirepublicans were in power in Italy, Germany, Austria, and France (and the situation in Spain also had ominous aspects, as described below). The utter destruction of Germany’s left in the previous year had made a particularly strong impression in France, where leading leftists bemoaned the failure of Germany’s left to unite effectively against Hitler. France’s own divided left needed to take note.

The Great Turning Point, 1934–5: Comintern Policy and the Ethiopian War

The riots of February 6, 1934 helped to set into motion developments that resulted in the formation of the Popular Front, an anti-fascist coalition that came to power in both France and Spain in 1936. Crucial to this turning point were changes in the policy of the

Comintern, whose leaders were forced to recognize the utter failure of the revolutionary doctrine they had forwarded since 1928: Proletarian revolution had not followed Hitler's takeover. That France in the hands of the right might join Germany and Italy in a broad anti-Communist alliance was a nightmare for Soviet leaders. They had strived since 1917 to keep Europe's major powers divided, since they recognized that the capitalist world, if ever it united, might well bring down the Soviet Union.

Soviet leaders were open to change for other reasons. As described in Chapter 17, the Congress of Victors in the summer of 1934 had announced a new period of class harmony inside the Soviet Union. Now Communists throughout the world were also directed to encourage harmony, or at least to ally with other anti-fascist forces, not only with democratic socialists but also with non-socialist democrats, possibly even with conservatives so long as they were firmly anti-fascist. In September 1934, Soviet Russia joined the League of Nations. Leading spokesmen for the Comintern, leaders who had in previous years denounced liberal democracy as a farce, now began to praise it. Member parties of the Comintern were encouraged to stress patriotic themes rather than proletarian internationalism.

In France, negotiations for the Popular Front at first progressed cautiously, due to long-standing suspicion among the major parties of the left, which were the Communist Party (PCF), the Socialist Party (SFIO), and the Radical Party. Concurrently, the Stresa Front began to show fracture lines, with implications for the formation of the Popular Front. Mussolini had for some time been studying the possibility of an imperial expansion into Ethiopia, Africa's only major area not controlled by Europeans, bordered on the north by Italian Eritrea and on the south by Italian Somaliland. Conquering Ethiopia had another attraction, in that it had been the scene of a humiliating defeat for Italy in 1896.

Mussolini hoped, by achieving military glory, to reverse a worrisome disaffection in Italy's population, especially its youth. In that goal he succeeded. During the so-called Second Ethiopian War, lasting from October 1935 to May 1936, Mussolini basked in the most ardent popular support he ever achieved. His earlier admonitions that "national pride has no need of the delirium of race" now seemed wholly forgotten. In justifying the attack on Ethiopia, he and other Fascist leaders resorted to crude forms of European racism against Africans. And, while the Fascist propaganda machine presented the war as heroic and glorious, the reality was a repulsive slaughter by a nation with airplanes and poison gas against a divided, often bewildered population that was equipped with largely inferior weapons.

Mussolini had apparently convinced himself that the French and British would eventually tolerate the Ethiopian escapade. In fact, there were many in those two countries who favored just such a toleration, in the belief that retaining Italy in the Stresa Front was crucial to containing Nazi Germany. At any rate, the denunciations of Italy's aggression that came from France and Britain, as well as from the League of Nations, were never accompanied by concrete measures adequate to prevent Italy's conquest of Ethiopia. The half-hearted steps finally taken only tended to inflame the belief by Italians that they were being held to unjust or hypocritical standards by other imperialist nations.

Inadequate reaction to aggression would be dismissed as "appeasement" a few years later, but the disintegration of the Stresa Front suggests how complicated opposition to aggression can become. There was some irony in the fact that in 1923 Italy had been instrumental in getting Ethiopia admitted into the League, against strong objections by

France and Britain, whose representatives noted that slavery was still openly practiced in Ethiopia, along with many other practices starkly in violation of League of Nations standards. At any rate, the League's failure to prevent Italy's takeover of Ethiopia was one of many proofs that it was an ineffective vehicle in combating nationalist aggression.

The Second Ethiopian War stands as a turning point insofar as it contributed to a shift in opinion and diplomatic alliances. Nazi Germany did not protest Italy's aggression, and a rapprochement of Italy and Germany began. By late 1936 Mussolini had begun to speak of a "Rome-Berlin Axis," which became the "Pact of Steel" in May 1939. He and other Italian spokesmen ceased their earlier derogatory references to Hitler and Nazism. In late 1938, anti-Jewish legislation was introduced in Italy.

Europe as a whole seemed to be moving toward a diplomatic situation that was ideological and bipolar: fascist vs. anti-fascist. However, such a move continued to be resisted; many leaders clung to the older notion of a balance of power between many nation-states. There had been what could be termed an ideological tendency of the pre-World War I coalition of democratic France and Britain (long-standing enemies before then) against a newly threatening autocratic Germany, but bringing autocratic Russia into the anti-German coalition underlined how national interest trumped ideological preference. However, the notion of establishing a firm diplomatic alliance with Communist Russia against Nazi Germany was exceedingly hard to accept for many conservatives in western Europe. A pact of mutual defense was negotiated between France and Russia in May 1935, but it encountered strong resistance in the French Chamber of Deputies and was finally approved by the narrowest of votes. Thus, between 1935 and 1938, much remained in limbo.

A series of interconnected questions came to the fore in those years, also having to do with the relationship between national interest and ideological commitment: What were the actual long-range goals of Nazism and Communism, as distinguished from their many tactical shifts? Could western democracies continue to tolerate either of them for long? And, if not, with which "evil" was it necessary to ally in order effectively to oppose the greater evil? As noted, these questions arose in regard to the Stresa Front; the way that people and nations responded to them on a broader scale was characterized by some dramatic shifts from 1933 to 1939.

These questions in a way resembled the question posed in 1919 and 1920 ("Wilson or Lenin?"), but now it seemed to many that it was a matter of choosing not between democracy and Communism but rather between two dynamic, totalitarian systems, seemingly "new" in nature and evolving in unexpected and alarming directions. For those who admired the American president, the question "Wilson or Lenin?" had implied another question: "Western civilization or Russian barbarism?" Whatever the hatred for Germany in 1919, its previous position as a shining light of western civilization was hard to deny, and, as the hatreds of World War I receded, hopes had arisen that a democratic Germany could securely join Europe's other advanced liberal democracies. Soviet Russia, conversely, remained for many observers a non-European pariah state, more barbaric and more dangerous than tsarist Russia ever was. Even after the Nazis took over Germany, many Europeans perceived the danger it presented to be significantly less than that of Soviet Russia, largely because of the reputation of the Germans as a more highly civilized people.

That being said, a strong minority of Europeans continued to consider Soviet Russia, whatever its lamentable contortions, as somehow still representing “the revolution,” the lingering hope for a humane non-capitalist future. For most European leftists any decision to ally with Soviet Russia and the Communist parties in their own countries did not necessarily mean that they hoped for a system exactly like that of the Soviet Union, and, at any rate, by early 1936 it had become more difficult to determine what a “Communist system” actually was, in light of the new, widely praised Soviet constitution of that year and the remarkably conciliatory statements coming from Moscow. But left-liberals and democratic socialists were primarily attracted to the Popular Front coalition because they believed that a unified left was necessary to oppose the fascist threat from within their own countries. For most of the conservative right and much of the center, Hitler and Nazism seemed the lesser evil.

The Popular Front in France, 1935–9

On July 14, 1935, Bastille Day in France, the three main parties of the Popular Front organized an anti-fascist rally. Close to a million fervent participants squeezed into the Place de la Bastille to hear ringing speeches against the fascist threat. That rally looked to the parliamentary elections scheduled for the following spring, and in those elections the Popular Front won 370 seats out of 618 in the Chamber of Deputies. The Socialists were the biggest winners, with 149 seats, for the first time passing the Radicals as the largest delegation to the Chamber. The Communists rose from 12 seats to 72, but the Radicals actually dropped from 157 to 109, a worrying sign since the drop suggested a move to the right of former centrist voters for the Radicals. Thus, although the Popular Front won 58 percent of the total vote (compared to 49 percent in the previous election for the then unallied parties), that vote revealed a sharper polarization of right and left in France and not a significant groundswell of votes for the left.

That political polarization was then intensified by the waves of strikes that rolled over France between the May 3 vote and the assumption of the office of prime minister on June 4 by the Socialist leader Léon Blum (France’s first Jew to hold that office). Although many on the right believed the strikes were Communist-led, the leaders of the PCF were as surprised by them as other party leaders, and did their best to calm the strikers. By the first week of June, some 2 million workers were involved, some of them occupying their factories and refusing to leave.

The French economy was brought to a near standstill. For a few on the extreme left, the strikes were hailed as the opening stage of the long-awaited revolution in the West, but such a fevered vision had scant evidence to support it. The strikes had more in common with the 1871 Paris Commune than with the Bolshevik Revolution, in the sense that they represented an inchoate exultation, a spontaneous flexing of muscle, with especially intriguing similarities to the Commune’s strange “festival of the oppressed” in the spring of 1871, before being brutally crushed by the forces supporting Thiers.

The Popular Front victory undoubtedly awakened lower-class expectations, but the strikers had no long-range or coordinated program and no nationwide leadership. Moreover, Blum had made it abundantly clear during the spring campaign that the goal of the Popular Front in France would be to “exercise” power under capitalism but not

“conquer” it, as would be the case in a future social revolution. Such a future revolution would be possible, according to Blum, only when a decisive majority of the population favored it, which was not the case in 1936. Blum’s conception of the exercise of power would involve, first of all, dealing with the fascist menace, but he also expressed a hope to accomplish something like the New Deal in the United States, attending to various social and economic inequities but retaining the market economy and private ownership of the means of production.

Blum called a meeting with representatives of French industry, whose attitudes at this point ranged from panic to sullen resignation, and the “Matignon Agreements” were hammered out. The Agreements and subsequent related legislation included a forty-hour week, salary increases averaging 12 percent, and two-week vacations with pay. The armaments industries were nationalized, and legislation passed that dissolved the fascist leagues, although in many cases the leagues simply reformed as political parties and as such were protected by the constitution. As predicted, many leaders of industry did all they could to circumvent or undermine the Agreements, and many workers complained that a rapid rise in the cost of living was nullifying their salary increases. Industrial leaders grumbled about a drop in productivity. Both had a point.

Many French investors moved their capital abroad, fearing for the future. The government needed a higher return from taxes to support its welfare measures, but it faced stagnation of labor productivity and a declining tax base. Early in 1937, Blum felt obliged to call a “pause” in the regime’s economic reforms. By the spring, barely a year after he took office, Blum was forced to resign, seemingly blocked in all directions, to be replaced by a Radical-led parliamentary coalition.

In contrast, the years 1936–7 were excellent ones for Nazi Germany. Hitler’s successful gamble in remilitarizing the Rhineland in March 1936 (described below) was followed by the triumphant Berlin Olympics in the summer. The German economy seemed to be booming. Germany’s workers, now without independent unions, actually increased their productivity, in part because they worked longer hours. Industry leaders and investors in Germany were far more supportive of the Nazi government than their French counterparts were of the Popular Front. Nazi youth sang joyously, “the future is ours!”

The challenges Blum faced in foreign policy were even more daunting than the domestic ones, and his failures equally dispiriting. In early March 1936, while a weak caretaker government was in power in France, awaiting the May elections, Hitler had taken a major foreign-policy gamble in remilitarizing the Rhineland, against the advice of his generals and in violation of the Locarno Agreements. By the time that Blum assumed power in June, he judged it too late to respond. But, even if he had been in power in March, he would have faced powerful opposition to any effort to drive Germany’s armies out of the Rhineland. The fiasco of the Ruhr occupation in 1923 was still fresh in the minds of the French population; after it the French were reticent to take any unilateral action, and the British made it clear that they would not participate in any military joint action against Germany over the issue of the Rhineland’s remilitarization.

In July 1936, after barely a month in office, Blum learned that General Franco had risen up against Spain’s Popular Front, an uprising that quickly developed into a full-scale civil war. While some on the left of France’s Popular Front, especially the Communists, agitated in favor of full-scale military aid to the Spanish Popular Front, the Radicals, as well as many leading figures in Blum’s own Socialist Party, were adamantly

opposed. For them, as for a large part of France's populace, being drawn into Spain's civil war appeared too similar to being drawn into the Balkan miasma in August 1914.

The reticence of the French in terms of taking unilateral action since 1923 effectively meant that they needed British support for any major foreign-policy initiative, but that support was notably lacking. Conservatives remained strong in Britain's parliament in the early 1930s, while the Labour and Liberal parties, facing no real fascist threat within Britain, had shown little interest in a British Popular Front. The British Union of Fascists (BUF) attracted approximately 40,000 members, the same as the British Communist Party; both remained thin sects on the fringe of British politics.

The weakness of anti-fascist sentiment in Britain's ruling class had earlier been demonstrated in the naval agreement Britain signed with Nazi Germany in June 1935, a mere two months after the formation of the ill-fated Stresa Front. By that agreement Germany was allowed to increase the size of its navy to 35 percent of the Royal Navy and to build submarines. Thus Hitler's rearmament gained a degree of legitimacy. Britain's entirely negative reaction to the notion of aiding the Popular Front in the Spanish Civil War yet further underlined the reservations of the ruling Conservatives about becoming entangled in any anti-fascist crusade.

The Spanish Civil War, 1936–9

It is always precarious for one country to become involved in another's civil war. French and American support for anti-Bolshevik forces in 1919–20 had proven useless, perhaps even counterproductive in the Russian Civil War, since it allowed the Bolsheviks to portray themselves as defending Mother Russia from foreign invaders. The civil war in Spain resembled that in Russia in that there was a breakdown of central authority and a bewildering mixture of violently opposed parties linked to rag-tag military forces – most, again as in Russia, hostile to foreign intervention.

For much of the 1920s, Spain's political history had been turbulent, often on the edge of civil war. For such reasons, Primo de Rivera had taken over as dictator in 1923, and King Alfonso had finally departed in early 1931. Class tensions worsened with the depressed early 1930s, and whole regions of Spain, if given the choice, would have voted for independence from Madrid. The sense of a modern political community in Spain had long been weak, the emotional distance between upper and lower orders particularly stark. When the king left in the spring of 1931, a coalition of radical democrats and reformist socialists cooperated in writing a new constitution, resembling in many regards that of the Weimar Republic, though even more leftist. Approved by a national referendum, the new constitution became official in December 1931.

But the passions that had for so many years torn at the country's fabric were not calmed; if anything, they worsened. In the four years between the adoption of the constitution and the electoral victory of the Popular Front in February 1936, violent unrest spread, with formal electoral victories shifting from left to right and then back to left. The governing coalitions of both left and right demonstrated their inability (or unwillingness) to control their more fanatical followers. More profoundly, there was little willingness to recognize any legitimacy on the opposing side. Of course, nearly everywhere in Europe, especially after 1929, the sense of modern political community

was breaking down, but the demonization of political opponents – so apparent in the right-wing slogan in France, “Better Hitler than Blum!” – was even more widespread in Spain.

The parliamentary coalition of the Spanish Popular Front consisted of many parties, considerably more diverse than the Communist-Socialist-Radical alliance in France. The word “coalition” may overstate things, in that the factions of the Spanish left and the various dissident nationalities often seemed to hate one another as much they hated Franco’s “fascists.” And, whereas the Socialists became the largest party in France with the May elections, the anarchists retained the largest popular following in Spain. However, the anarchists were not represented by a single party, and anarchist organizations, especially the unions (*sindicatos*), were deeply suspicious of parliamentary rule, looking instead to a radically decentralized, more or less stateless future, referred to as “anarcho-syndicalist.”

The Spanish Popular Front was headed by the radical democrat Manuel Azaña, who had already been prime minister in 1931 and had earned a special hatred from the right for his zealous efforts to weaken the Church and reform the military. The immediate agendas of both Azaña and Blum, then, involved radical-democratic reform, but in Spain radical democracy was still a distant goal, involving major changes and challenging many vested interests, whereas in France, as noted above, much of the nineteenth-century Radical (or Jacobin) agenda had been put into effect before 1936.

With the electoral victory of the Spanish Popular Front in February 1936, lower-class expectations ran amok in many areas; the most powerful strike wave in Spanish history rolled over the country. Three months later, a powerful strike wave would also occur in France, but in the Spanish case it rallied millions of impoverished, often desperate landless laborers. Moreover, the belief in Spain that a fundamental social revolution had begun was considerably more justified than in France, even if coherent revolutionary leadership and agreed-upon goals were even more absent in Spain than in France.

Rather than a “festival of the oppressed,” the Spanish Popular Front more often seemed to have unleashed a violently destructive “revenge of the oppressed,” involving acts of terror against right-wing political leaders and army officers, bombings of churches and cathedrals, rapes of nuns, and attacks on well-dressed people in the streets. This surge of popular violence provoked corresponding acts of terror by right-wing groups against the left.

The British author George Orwell, later world-famous for his novels *1984* and *Animal Farm*, recorded his own impressions of what the revolution looked like in Barcelona by late 1936:

Practically every building ... had been seized by the workers and draped with red flags or the red and black flags of the anarchists Every shop and café had inscription saying it had been collectivized Loudspeakers were bellowing revolutionary songs all day and far into the night Practically everyone wore rough working-class clothes ... or some variant of the militia uniform.

José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s previously mentioned Falange rallied to Franco’s cause, and the Falangists eventually became an important element in the anti-Popular

Front uprising, lending more plausibility to the epithet “fascist,” even if Franco and many of those around him remained traditional Catholic military men, more inclined to reactionary monarchism than to fascism as practiced in Italy and Germany. But, once Franco had accepted the aid offered by Mussolini and Hitler, the term did seem appropriate to those believing themselves part of a Europe-wide anti-fascist struggle. Mussolini eventually sent some 100,000 troops; Hitler offered his Condor Legion, which, in bombing a small market town, Guernica, killing many civilians, became immortalized by Pablo Picasso in his painting of that name. Frantic diplomatic efforts by Britain and France to prevent the war from spreading resulted in the signing of a Non-Intervention Pact by some twenty-odd nations. But Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy simply ignored it, as did Soviet Russia.

A major split within the Spanish Popular Front’s governing ranks soon developed over the related issues of centralizing military command and enforcing discipline on the part of the Front’s fractious supporters, especially the workers’ militias and the International Brigades (composed of volunteers arriving from other countries to join in the fight against fascism). The Communists insisted that victory could only be achieved by rigorous centralization of state power and by imposing military discipline in the ranks. They also stressed the importance of curtailing social revolution in order to avoid alienating those middle-class citizens who might be inclined to support the Popular Front. The anarchists, fundamentally hostile to authority and centralization, countered that the masses would see no reason to risk their lives if the goal were simply to return to statist rule and authoritarian class society.

Distrust of the Communists was not limited to the anarchists; most of the other parties of the Spanish Popular Front came to have doubts about the Communists’ methods – and, perhaps even more, about their actual goals in the war. The strength and popular support of the Spanish Communist Party had been enhanced since the beginning of the war, mostly because of the military aid given to the Popular Front by Soviet Russia, which was funneled through the Spanish Communists. However, Stalin sent not only weapons and ammunition but also secret-police agents to Spain, to ferret out “Trotskyites” (a very loosely applied term), resulting in arrests in the night, confessions under torture, and summary executions at dawn. The years of the Spanish Civil War largely overlapped those of the Purge Trials in Russia, where Trotskyites, Zinovievites, and other alleged evil-doers were being tried and summarily executed or sent to slave-labor camps by the millions. After the Spanish Civil War, Stalin arrested and put to death virtually all of the Soviet generals who served in Spain.

The war in Spain lumbered on until Franco’s victory in early 1939, with a final death toll of more than a half-million out of a population of around 25 million. The reasons for the victory of Franco’s forces have been much debated, but the question might be more revealingly posed as, “Why did the Popular Front in Spain fail?” Wars are always unpredictable, civil wars especially so, but the divisions of those formally supporting the Popular Front revealed themselves to be so fundamental as to make victory not only unlikely but practically impossible. Even if the Popular Front had prevailed over Franco’s forces, another civil war would likely have arisen between the factions of the Front. Similarly, victory in Spain for the anti-fascist forces would not have been enough to tip the balance on the international front, if only because Spain was not a significant military power. More fundamentally, the divisions of the liberal democrats and moderates in

the rest of Europe in regard to Nazi Germany were nearly as crippling as those of the anti-fascists in Spain against Franco.

Orwell, who returned from the battlefield gravely wounded by a bullet through his neck, narrowly missed being arrested by Soviet agents while he was recuperating. He later wrote of his "overwhelming desire to get away from it all; away from the horrible atmosphere of political suspicion and hatred ... from almost everything I had learned to associate with Spain." He retained an aversion to fascism but affectionate feelings for the Spanish common people, though he could not help noting how gullible they could be, how quickly they could lapse into shocking cruelty.

The Spanish Civil War has been described as a dress rehearsal for World War II. On the one hand it did appear international, but on the other it seemed an eruption of specifically Spanish troubles, ones that were little understood by outsiders. It came to resemble the Dreyfus Affair in the extent to which it catalyzed right and left while revealing ugly attributes on both sides. Orwell's disillusionment with what he saw in Spain haunted many on the left. Continuing to believe that Stalin and the Comintern were upholders of humanity, democracy, and justice became more difficult. Still, for many on the hard left, or those who faced racial persecution if the fascists prevailed, the choices appeared starkly limited, and they thus tended to excuse the dark side of Stalinism, much as others on the right tended to excuse the dark side of Nazism – at least until those sides became impossible to ignore.

The Era of Appeasement, 1936–8

Appeasement and the Popular Front were overlapping yet contrasting reactions to the challenge of Nazism. Those supporting the Popular Front hoped that a united left could block Nazism; appeasement tended to attract those who considered Communism to be a greater danger than Nazism. Both reactions ultimately failed, in part because of the widespread belief that another war on the scale of World War I was unacceptable – an absolute evil to be avoided at all costs. The slaughter of the Spanish Civil War only reinforced such conclusions. Also, at a fundamental level, the Popular Front and appeasement evolved out of two unjustified claims: first, that the Paris Peace Conference had established a just peace; and, second, that the Bolshevik Revolution represented the fulfillment of the Marxist vision of socialism and of Enlightened values more generally.

Before 1938, the connotations of the word "appeasement" had been positive, roughly "measures conducive to peace." Disentangling the notion of appeasement, with these earlier connotations, from the more familiar practice of an amoral foreign policy is difficult. Obviously a softness in regard to fascism existed for a number of years, even with Churchill, although he would eventually become the heroic anti-appeaser. As noted above, efforts by British statesmen to "appease" Mussolini (or practice *realpolitik* in his regard) were evident in the Stresa Front and continued during and well after the Ethiopian war, primarily motivated by hopes to prevent or undermine his rapprochement with Hitler.

Obviously the present-day negative connotations of appeasement derive much less from the softness toward Mussolini in the Stresa (insofar as it is even remembered) than from the more extensive efforts to appease Hitler. Britain's naval agreements with Germany in June 1935 can be seen as an early obvious example of the appeasement of

the Nazi dictator. Allowing the remilitarization of the Rhineland is a much more important one, and the failure to do anything effective in preventing Germany and Italy from aiding Franco is yet another. However, appeasement reached its most famous and crucial stage in 1938, first in allowing the *Anschluss* of Austria in March and then in giving in to Hitler's demands in regard to the Sudetenland in September.

In July 1934, as noted above, Hitler had backed away from incorporating Austria. By early 1938, the issue reemerged, but in a substantially different context. Hitler was stronger, both militarily and in terms of his personal popularity. For many Austrians, by 1938 being incorporated into Germany had become more attractive than before. When Mussolini explicitly stated that he no longer had objections to the incorporation of Austria into Germany, Hitler was elated, repeatedly exclaiming, in a remarkable telephone conversation with the Duce, that he would never forget this concession – “never, never, never, whatever happens.”

As pressures built over the issue, Hitler's tendency to respond flexibly to unforeseen situations rather than to stick to a precise plan was again demonstrated. In early February he invited Kurt Schuschnigg, the Austrian Christian-Social chancellor, to his mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden, where he subjected him to a three-hour browbeating. As a result, Schuschnigg agreed to appoint an Austrian Nazi to the post of minister of the interior. However, once back in Austria, Schuschnigg unexpectedly announced that he was organizing a plebiscite to determine whether Austria's citizens actually favored a union with Germany. Before these plans could be put into effect, Hitler ordered his troops into Austria. They encountered no significant opposition, and Hitler then received a rapturous welcome when he personally traveled first to Linz, his hometown, and then Vienna. Most observers concluded that a plebiscite would have supported the *Anschluss*, and no foreign power was willing to go to war to reverse Hitler's action, however much it violated previous treaty agreements.

The Nazi Reich thus abruptly grew to around 80 million. The German historian Hans Mommsen has argued that the *Anschluss* marked a decisive release of bundled-up radicalizing energies within Nazism; from March 1938 on, Nazi assertiveness in both domestic and foreign policy became bolder, if not reckless, epitomized by the mob violence against Jews in Vienna. Discontented German minorities in other countries, observing how Hitler had so effortlessly brought Austria's Germans “home to the Reich,” saw new hopes for remedying their own situation. No sooner had the *Anschluss* been consummated than Hitler turned his attention to the long-simmering situation of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia.

The Sudeten Germans, numbering around 3.5 million, charged that the discrimination they had long faced from the ruling Czech majority had become all the more blatant since the onset of the depression. As noted in Chapter 15, the awkward truth was that Czechoslovakia did not constitute a nation-state on Wilsonian principles. By 1938 it had not succeeded in reconciling its minorities, Germans and others, to Czech domination. Moreover, after the *Anschluss*, Czechoslovakia's German-speaking western areas constituted an even more conspicuous salient, surrounded by the expanded Nazi Reich. By the late summer of 1938, Hitler was poised to invade Czechoslovakia as he had Austria in March.

It was at this point that the British Conservative prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, tried most ambitiously to apply the policy of appeasement for which his name has since

become so notorious. Chamberlain actually stood at the left of the Conservative Party, not so clearly soft on fascism and hard on Communism as his party's right wing. He detested both ideologies, but he was persuaded that, by recognizing Germany's legitimate grievances and negotiating skillfully, he could bring Hitler around to a reasonable, non-violent resolution of the crisis in Czechoslovakia.

In that belief, Chamberlain obviously showed himself more sympathetic to German Nazism than to Russian Communism. It is difficult to imagine him traveling to Moscow (where, it will be remembered, show trials were in progress) in the conviction that Soviet Russia had been unfairly treated at the Paris Peace Conference and that he could appeal to Stalin's reasonable side by recognizing Soviet Russia's legitimate grievances. At any rate, Chamberlain could not have contemplated anything so unacceptable to his party's right wing. Britain's previous Conservative prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, spoke for many in his party when he observed that his heart would not be broken if Hitler attacked Communist Russia. Conservatives in both Britain and France no doubt would have been content to see Hitler launch an attack on Russia. Similarly, many on the right warned that a war against Germany by France and Britain would turn into "Stalin's war" – that is, a war that would so exhaust Germany, France, and Britain that the Red Army could then pick up the pieces of the broken capitalist world, as it had hoped to do after World War I.

However, for all Chamberlain's initial efforts, the twists and turns of negotiations resulted in a deadlock, and for a while in the early autumn of 1938 Europe's peoples were gloomily bracing for the coming of war. But then last-minute efforts by Mussolini, who had earlier warned Hitler that Italy was not ready for war, succeeded in arranging a meeting in Munich in the last week of September. There Hitler finally gained what he had been demanding all along: that all areas of western Czechoslovakia with a majority German population were to be transferred to the Nazi Reich. Chamberlain returned home from Munich, to deliriously happy crowds, with the announcement that he had brought "peace in our time." The French prime minister, Édouard Daladier, who played a secondary but supportive role in the negotiations, was similarly welcomed in France.

Within a short time, Hitler violated the terms of the agreement, which included a promise to respect the sovereignty of the truncated Czechoslovak state; within six months he had taken over the Czech-majority areas, giving them the name of the "Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia." And that was not all: The Nazi leader soon revved up another long-standing issue, that of the Polish Corridor (described in Chapter 20). War had been averted in September only to break out a year later – on far less favorable terms for Britain and France.

Hitler's bold moves in foreign policy in late 1938 had parallels inside Germany. On the night of November 9–10, after a German diplomat had been assassinated by a young German-born Polish Jew, a massive rampage or pogrom, known in English as "the Night of Broken Glass" (*Reichskristallnacht*), broke out in Germany. There has been debate about the extent to which this violent uprising was a genuinely spontaneous popular uprising, as distinguished from being instigated by Nazi leaders. Hitler had previously described the pogroms of eastern Europe as the wrong way to deal with the Jewish Question. Chaotic mob violence, furthermore, was contrary to German traditions, and undoubtedly large parts of the German population did not participate; most simply observed the rioters passively. However, Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister,

publicly announced that, although Hitler did not want violent demonstrations to be organized by the party, insofar as expressions of indignation over the assassination erupted spontaneously, they were not to be obstructed.

What actually happened varied widely throughout the Reich, but in most areas the violence and destruction were not “popular” but rather the work of small, loosely organized bands of Nazis, “guided” and often aided by the police. The riots were afterwards considered a public-relations disaster, bitterly denounced within party councils by several Nazi leaders. Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, considered the riots the result of Goebbels’ “megomania and stupidity.” Hermann Goering, in charge of Germany’s economy, lamented the senseless destruction, which undermined the country’s economic recovery. Few if any Nazi leaders objected to the riots on moral grounds. Wild and wanton destruction of Jewish shop windows and synagogues, rarely if ever seen on such a scale in the past in German areas, occurred throughout the Nazi Reich. Around 100 Jews were killed, and tens of thousands were arrested and sent to concentration camps, though most were later released on the condition that they leave Germany immediately.

The perplexing picture of *Reichskristallnacht*, especially the difficulty of attributing direct responsibility to Hitler, is revealing in regard to the following years of mass murder, when again a diffusion of responsibility and competition between Nazi leaders and various agencies prevailed. Some have given the date of November 9–10 as the beginning of the Holocaust, but that date, while marking a sharp increase in violence against Jews, is in one important regard misleading: The main focus of this “solution” was to force Jews out of Germany, stripping them of their wealth in the process, not to murder them. In the ensuing period before the outbreak of war, more than 115,000 Jews fled the expanded Nazi Reich. But forcing Jews from Germany did not constitute a final solution to the Jewish Question, if only because the overwhelming majority of Europe’s Jews still lived outside Germany. The largest concentration of them was in the Slavic lands to the east—an area, according to Hitler, where Germany was destined to find its *Lebensraum* or “living space” (and where it would also find its greatest “killing space”).

Evaluating Appeasement

Chamberlain was by no means the only well-meaning, reasonable person to be taken in by the Führer, but much more was in play than Chamberlain’s naiveté or Hitler’s deviousness. Appeasement was enormously popular with the general population in Britain and France; opposing it was politically impossible. If Churchill had been prime minister at any time between early 1936 and late 1938, he would not have been able to rally his fellow countrymen in the way he later did. Had he or any other prime minister tried to take military action against Hitler in defiance of popular opinion, ignoring the dire warnings from Britain’s generals that the country was unprepared for war, he would almost certainly have been voted down in Parliament and removed from office.

Churchill was able to rally his country only later (he became prime minister on May 10, 1940), after every effort at a compromise peace had been exhausted and Britain had had more time to prepare for war. Even then, the support he found was less wholehearted than many accounts might lead one to believe. Before 1939 Churchill had become close

to a political pariah, a man of obvious brilliance but also known as a reckless gambler, associated with a number of disastrous military decisions in earlier years.

Roughly comparable remarks hold for what might have been accomplished by an earlier, more aggressive opposition to Hitler's actions against the Jews. The threat of an economic boycott against Nazi Germany did seem to impress Hitler in early 1933, but his retreat on boycotting Jewish businesses was only tactical, reflecting his understanding that he needed to improve Germany's economy if his regime was to gain popularity. (And that he was believed to have revived the economy was undoubtedly an important reason for his popularity.) In the immediately following years (1934–7), the measures taken against the Jews by the Nazi regime were not considered outrageous enough to justify economic sanctions against Germany, let alone more severe measures. Nazi Germany by the mid-1930s was basking in its “golden years” of economic recovery, popular support, and international prestige. The issue of admitting large numbers of German refugees into other countries became intense only after March 1938, but even those who bore no ill will toward Jews were reticent, in the midst of the Great Depression, to open their countries to hundreds of thousands of them.

Insofar as the democratic world's ineffective reaction to the persecution of Germany's Jews has been linked to the concept of appeasement, it has been in the failure of that world to recognize soon enough the fundamentally criminal essence of the Nazi regime, to perceive that nothing Hitler said could be trusted – and that, in both foreign and domestic policy, Hitler's confidence grew as concessions were offered to him. Such realizations began to sink in only after the Munich Agreements and *Reichskristallnacht*, but even then few observers who opposed opening their nations to massive Jewish immigration fully appreciated the mortal danger that Jews were in.

There was another powerful regime with a fundamentally criminal essence, of longer standing and at this point greater proven inhumanity than Nazi Germany: Stalinist Russia. The world also had failed to recognize that essence or do anything effective against it. However, the comparisons with reactions to Nazi Germany are not entirely apt, since Russia in the 1930s did not appear aggressively expansionist to the degree that Nazi Germany did by 1938. Still, no doubt millions of Soviet citizens, as millions of Jews in Germany and Poland, would have emigrated to other countries if they had been given the option.

At any rate, for much of Europe's left wing, Soviet Russia during the Popular Front era emerged as humanity's best hope to counter the plague of fascism. Who among them would have dreamed that Hitler and Stalin were about to sign an alliance?

Further Reading

The diplomatic origins of World War II are well covered in Kershaw's books and other previously mentioned volumes (see the Further Reading section to Chapter 18). Those books also deal with the Holocaust, but two other highly recommended books are Saul Friedländer's volumes: *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (1997) and *The Years of Extermination, 1939–45* (2007).

For the Popular Front, see Joel Colton's biography *Léon Blum: A Humanist in Politics* (1987) and also John Keegan's *The Second World War* (1990), Gordon Wright's *The Ordeal of Total War, 1939–45* (1990; 1st ed. 1968), and Niall Ferguson's *The War of the World* (2007).

20 World War II and the Holocaust

1939–43

However horrific World War I, World War II was worse for many countries, and especially for the civilian populations of Europe. It was also a more dramatic conflict, filled with tense moments and startling, unexpected developments. As outlined in Chapter 19, debates about its origins have been less divisive than those about the origins of World War I, and for many years World War II was conceptualized by both Western and Communist historians as “the good war” – or at least one in which good and evil seemed more tangible than had been the case in the previous war. But during the years of that good war some of the most appalling horrors of modern times occurred – some under the auspices of the “good” side.

There were not only surprising developments but also paradoxes galore during World War II, prominent among them Churchill’s transition from militant anti-Communist to a kind of admirer of Stalin and the Soviet system, in the context, obviously, of a paradoxical capitalist–Communist alliance against Nazism.

But what might be termed the greatest roller-coaster ride was the relations between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany: Deadly enemies from 1933 to 1939, they become allies in late August 1939, each attacking Poland and dividing the country between themselves. Then, in late June 1941, after gaining domination of most of Europe, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, routing the Red Army and moving Germany’s military forces perilously close to Leningrad and Moscow. Many observers concluded that the end for the Soviet Union was only a matter of time. But at the Battle of Stalingrad, from the early autumn through the winter of 1942–3, the Soviet forces launched a remarkable counteroffensive. From that point on, Germany’s armies were on the defensive.

Treatment of those under Nazi domination, both prisoners of war and civilians, was barbaric from the beginning of the war but reached unparalleled depths of brutality and genocidal intent once Nazi Germany began to feel the pressures of total war and then impending defeat (further described in Chapter 21).

Appeasement from the East and the Outbreak of World War II

Of all the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, the Polish Corridor and the status of Danzig were the most widely resented in Germany. If Hitler had taken up those issues first in 1938, he might have received an even more “reasonable” reaction from Chamberlain than he did in regard to the Sudetenland. But when, in early 1939, Hitler began to demand alterations to the Corridor and the status of Danzig, Chamberlain formally declared that Britain and France were determined to defend Poland if threatened



Figure 20.1 Hitler: “The scum of the earth, I believe?” Stalin: “The bloody assassin of the workers, I presume?” Cartoonist David Low’s “Rendezvous,” originally published in the *Evening Standard*, September 20, 1939. Source: British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent, www.cartoons.ac.uk/London Evening Standard.

by Germany. This was not the most advantageous point at which to take such a firm stance, but Chamberlain was in no mood to let Hitler get away with anything more.

Hitler did not take Chamberlain's threat seriously; he believed that Germany could achieve a quick victory over Poland and that, confronted with a *fait accompli*, Britain and France would once again offer some sort of face-saving compromise. He knew that the British army was not ready for war, and that in France the earlier chants of "Better Hitler than Blum!" were being replaced with "Why die for Danzig?" (the German city within the corridor). The French, moreover, while prepared to defend themselves against an attack from Germany, were not prepared to launch a major attack on Germany's now-militarized Rhineland as a way to aid Poland.

In practical terms, for British and French military forces to come directly to distant Poland's defense was fraught with difficulties. An obvious step was to negotiate an alliance with Poland's eastern neighbor, the Soviet Union, but the long-standing obstacles in that regard remained: The Poles and Soviets distrusted one another profoundly, and an alliance with Communist Russia was a bitter pill to swallow for many conservatives in France and Britain. The Soviet Union had not even been invited to the Munich conference, even though it had earlier signed treaties with Czechoslovakia and was all too obviously an interested party. Poland's leaders refused to allow Red Army troops to be stationed on their land.

Poland, "the Christ among nations," would experience great suffering at the hands of Nazi Germany. However, "Christ-like" is perhaps not the most apt description for Poland's leaders, who were themselves expansionist and who had just shown themselves quick to take advantage of Czechoslovakia's vulnerability after Munich by seizing the border area of Teschen, where Czech and Polish forces had clashed over rival claims in 1919. (Hungary similarly used the opportunity to take over areas on Czechoslovakia's southeastern border, where there were large Magyar-speaking populations.)

British and French delegations did travel to Moscow to negotiate a treaty, but over the spring and summer of 1939 they were unable to come up with an agreement that satisfied both sides. And then came the news, like a bolt from the blue: Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, those arch-enemies, had signed a pact of non-aggression! The Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 23, 1939, has often been described as a deal between two unprincipled dictators, effectively giving Hitler a green light to proceed with his plans to attack Poland, thus launching World War II. That both were unprincipled dictators was true enough, but the pact might more aptly be termed an exercise of *realpolitik*, of national interest again trumping ideological affinity. Put in different terms, Germany and Russia had much to offer one another at this point, whereas for Soviet Russia an alliance with France and Britain seemed less promising.

Stalin and his advisers had become suspicious of what they sensed might be the covert motives of Britain and France, given their record, since at least 1934, of failing to muster effective opposition to Hitler's aggressive actions. Could this unwillingness to risk war in the west be interpreted as implicitly encouraging Hitler to turn his expansionist instincts toward Russia, accomplishing his long-established goal of *Lebensraum*? As noted above, many conservatives had openly expressed their hopes for just such a turn of events. The Nazi-Soviet Pact could then be seen as a Machiavellian turning of the tables on Britain and France: "appeasement from the east," or "two can play this game." From the Soviet standpoint, even if an alliance could have been hammered out

with France and Britain, it was obvious that those countries would be reluctant allies, and they might later be tempted to sign a separate peace with Germany.

Similarly, the British and French did not trust Stalin to remain a faithful ally in fighting Germany. Beyond signatures on a piece of paper, trust and abiding advantages were necessary for alliances to survive, but trust was absent on both sides and advantages might change. From Stalin's standpoint, allying with Hitler could be considered "fighting evil (western capitalist nations) with evil (Nazi Germany)." The first major foreign-policy move of the Bolsheviks had been the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty with Germany, and after the war they had signed the Rapallo Treaty with the Weimar Republic (and, before that, tsarist Russia had allied with Bismarckian Germany). Russo-German alliances were not uncommon when they seemed advantageous.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact offered Stalin the great advantage of staying out of the looming war over Poland at a point when his ongoing purges of the Red Army's leadership left Soviet Russia particularly vulnerable. Moreover, by the terms of the pact, Russia's western borders would be extended significantly; in an attached secret protocol, spheres of influence were outlined that allowed the Soviet Union to take over much of the territory Russia had lost in World War I. Tensions with Japan on the Manchurian border at this time made staying out of any conflict in the west all the more attractive for Stalin.

The Opening Stages of World War II

The Nazi-Soviet Pact undoubtedly opened the floodgates to world war. The battles that ensued in the next six years, in Europe, North Africa, and Asia, resulted in more military and civilian deaths (an estimated 60 million) than between 1914 and 1919, to say nothing of the years of tortured existence for the millions herded into concentration and prisoner-of-war camps during the war. For the period from late 1939 to early 1943, it increasingly seemed to many Europeans that Hitler's Reich, brilliantly triumphant in battle after battle and immensely popular with the German people, was destined to dominate Europe for many years.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact also marked an ominous point in regard to the situation of Europe's Jews, since the ever-expanding war opened wide the options for mass murder. Nazi leaders became less inhibited by the prospect of international indignation, while they gained life-and-death power over millions of Jews. By late 1941, close to a majority of Europe's Jews were in the hands of the Nazis, including nearly all of those living in the former tsarist lands of Poland and the Jewish Pale of Settlement. The dilemmas of dealing with these additional millions of Jews, in the midst of raging total war, drew Nazi leaders toward more ruthlessly violent solutions.

The declarations of war in early September 1939 that began World War II (Germany against Poland on September 1, Britain and France against Germany on September 3) were not greeted by cheering crowds, as had been the case in early August 1914. Even in Berlin the popular mood remained somber, a reaction that disappointed and angered Hitler. The only deliriously happy crowds in this period had been those who were told, less than a year before, that "peace in our time" had been achieved. Hitler now had what must be termed *his* war, not a war willed by the German masses or even by Germany's

military – although, no doubt, as sensational victory after victory ensued in the next two years, those masses expressed a frenzied adoration of their god-sent Führer, and Hitler's generals became ever more obsequious to him.

The Nazi victory in Poland went according to plan, as did, more or less, the ensuing Soviet advance into the eastern part of Poland two weeks later. The brilliant success of Germany's armies derived from the precisely coordinated offensive of aircraft and concentrated armored units, especially tanks, that dissolved the advantage the defensive had enjoyed in World War I. The air force, only beginning to be used in that war, was now applied to enhance the striking force of the panzer (armored) divisions. In this new "lightning war" (*Blitzkrieg*), the specialized and concentrated panzer divisions broke through Polish lines and raced on, with unheard-of speed, to encircle the units they had bypassed, cutting off supply lines and creating havoc in the rear. The weeks of artillery barrage that had preceded offensives by ground forces in World War I were no longer necessary; air strikes served to prepare the advance of the armored units, which were at any rate largely unaffected by machine-gun fire and thus needed less artillery preparation. Similarly, tanks could easily roll over the barbed wire of former no-man's-land and span trenches of the sort dug in World War I. The terrifying howl of the sirens attached to the infamous German Stuka dive bombers contributed to the panic of the Polish, both soldiers and civilians. Within less than four weeks, German forces were in Warsaw and the war effectively won.

Stalin seems to have been even more surprised than western observers at the speed of Germany's advance, although he was no doubt also relieved that his own armies were not experiencing the *Blitzkrieg*, as would have presumably been the case if he had signed a pact with France and Britain. On September 17, he ordered his forces to attack on Poland's east, ultimately regaining most of the territory Russia lost in its war with Poland in 1920–1.

While the defeat of Poland largely went according to Hitler's plan, the reaction of the British and French leaders did not. They refused his offers of an armistice, which was more troubling to Hitler than might be at first assumed, since Germany was not prepared for a lengthy, full-scale war. The planning that went into the *Blitzkrieg* relied on the premise of a quick victory. That Germany's economy had not shifted into the kind of high gear necessary for a long, grinding general war reflected the fact that Hitler did not expect one, but it also reflected his reticence to impose on the German population the kind of belt-tightening that a lengthy war would entail, including such measures as putting women to work in war factories, which was contrary to his sense of a woman's proper place.

Hitler again proved himself less a prudent and skillful planner than a brilliant improviser, reacting to the cards that had been dealt him. Since January 1933, that brilliance had won him many victories, first in domestic and then in foreign policy, but whether such improvisation, bolstered by a gambler's luck, could prevail over more fundamental realities in the long run was another question. The consequences of Hitler's lack of planning for a long war would emerge more strongly as the war lengthened, but even in September 1939 the Nazi Reich, enlarged in the course of 1938 from 62 to 80 million inhabitants, was taking on a very large challenge, since it was heavily outnumbered by the combined populations of Britain, France, and Poland (approximately 120 million). More important than raw numbers, Britain and France still controlled the seas and thus access to the wider world's resources.

Therefore, although the *Blitzkrieg* seemed to have changed the dynamics of battlefield fundamentally, hope survived in Britain and France that the blockade that had so weakened Germany in World War I could be applied again to decisive effect. Unlike that earlier situation, however, Italy provided a conduit for goods to get into Germany. Moreover, Soviet Russia continued to deliver food and raw materials to Germany, as part of the secret agreements of the Nazi–Soviet Pact. Even in regard to future battlefield confrontations, the broader implications of the Polish defeat were uncertain, since Poland was a relatively underdeveloped nation and its flat, open country was ideal terrain for the *Blitzkrieg*. Whether the battlefield tactics of September 1939 would work as well in other areas remained to be seen. They would obviously not work over a body of water, as an attack on Britain would entail, but, even in the north of France and adjoining Belgium, the terrain, though flat near the coast, differed in many areas from that of Poland, and the immense fortifications of the Maginot Line seemed capable of withstanding attacks by planes and armored divisions.

The strange months of war that immediately followed Poland's defeat, variously termed "Phony War," "Funny War" (*drôle de guerre*), and "Sitting War" (*Sitzkrieg*), reflected Hitler's stubborn belief that the French and British could be expected to come to terms eventually. Thus all that he had to do was be patient. The French and British calculated that their best hope of defeating Germany was to weaken it by blockade rather than by a direct military attack. Both sides at this point were hesitant to be the first to start an air war; bombing civilian centers in particular seemed unattractive because retaliation in kind could be expected to follow, and both had large cities within bomber range. Those winter months of November through March were cold and stormy; the Germans used them to train, and the French and British waited, pondering alternatives but also building up their armaments at a rapid rate.

Both sides had something quite relevant to observe and ponder in these months: the so-called Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union, lasting from December to mid-March 1940. It was anything but phony or funny. Stalin, after taking over most of the Polish territory that had been part of the tsarist empire, moved to firm up his influence over other parts of that former empire. He pressured the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into signing treaties of "mutual assistance," involving the stationing of Red Army detachments in Lithuania. But Finland staunchly resisted the demands made on it to give up Vyborg, a territory at the head of the Gulf of Finland, where Finland's border was only twenty miles from Leningrad. Resistance by the Finns developed into full-scale war when the Red Army suddenly attacked, without a formal declaration of war and in violation of a non-aggression pact signed between the two countries in 1932.

In raw numbers, the confrontation was utterly unequal: The Red Army had around thirty times more airplanes and perhaps a hundred times more tanks than Finland, but the Red Army had also lost most of its officer corps in the recent purges. World opinion was almost entirely against the Soviet Union, which was expelled from the League of Nations for this aggression. The Communist parties of the world, staggering already under the burden of defending the Nazi–Soviet Pact, now had to shoulder the even more onerous task of trying to portray the Finns ("the brave little Finns," as most non-Communist observers termed them) as the villains of the conflict. Communist party memberships in Europe, which had rapidly increased in most countries during the

Popular Front period and then rapidly declined with the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact, plummeted in the course of the Winter War.

That war was an international embarrassment and a military disaster for the Soviet Union. The Finns killed and wounded more Soviet soldiers than there were in the entire Finnish army. Nonetheless, the Red Army was able to impose its will in gaining the Vyborg area, though not in occupying Finland as a whole. That the brave little Finns soon after became an ally of Nazi Germany was a somewhat awkward and seldom-emphasized detail of this expanding war, though really no more awkward or morally objectionable than the later alliance of Britain and the United States with Soviet Russia. The British and later the Americans became formal enemies of those previously admired Finns – who would before long join the Nazi armies in attacking the Soviet Union. Rarely have the paradoxes of defining and combating evil been more starkly posed, or the attractions of realpolitik more persuasively illustrated.

Under tsarist rule in the nineteenth century, the Poles had experienced repeated efforts to destroy their independent spirit. Now both the Communists and the Nazis took up that task, with a single-minded ruthlessness that was directed especially at exterminating Poland's elites (intellectuals, religious leaders, nationalist politicians, military leaders). Among those elites were many Jews, but, in the area taken over by the Communists, in principle it was only the Jewish bourgeoisie that was targeted. In the area taken over by the Nazis, in contrast, Jewish race rather than bourgeois class was the fatal category. However, since a large part of the Jewish population in Poland was bourgeois by Communist standards (that is, owners of property, however small), Nazi and Communist measures against Jews paralleled one another to some degree. The Soviets put thousands of Poles to death, mostly peasants and non-Jews, in "Sovietizing" or imposing collectivized agriculture in eastern Poland, whereas Nazi goals were more in the direction of "Germanizing" their area, expelling the surviving Poles and other Slavs or reducing them to a slave-labor population.

It might be said that genocide, or a "holocaust" – cold-blooded mass murder of broadly defined categories of human beings without regard to their individual beliefs or actions – was set into motion in the autumn of 1939 by *both* Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. In one of the more chilling and now more amply documented examples, some 22,000 Polish military officers and other leading Poles were put to death as "anti-Soviet elements" by the Soviet secret police in April–May 1940. This particular Soviet atrocity later came to take on great significance, in that the remains of several thousand of those executed were uncovered by the invading Nazis in April 1943 in the area of the Katyn Forest in the Ukraine. Stalin indignantly denied responsibility, blaming the Nazis instead. It was a denial that the Soviet leaders continued to make, in spite of growing, finally overwhelming evidence to the contrary, until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

War in the West, 1940

The Phony War abruptly ended in early April 1940, when German forces attacked and quickly overwhelmed Denmark and Norway. On May 10, the *Blitzkrieg* was applied to the Low Countries and France, but with some bold adjustments in strategy and tactics, previously argued over by Hitler's generals and finally given the green light by him

personally: Rather than concentrating their attack along the flat coastal territory, through Belgium, as had been done by Germany under the Schlieffen Plan, the battle plan this time sent ten elite panzer divisions squeezing through the hilly, wooded area of the Ardennes Forest, more to the east and only lightly defended because it was believed that a large concentration of armored vehicles could not possibly pass through it. But the German divisions, stretched out at times for miles, nonetheless emerged out of the Ardennes well ahead of schedule, and then raced through open country toward the English Channel, reaching Dunkirk on the coast at the end of May.

The French and British, as well as the Belgians and Dutch, were repeatedly taken by surprise and outmaneuvered by the Germans. Some 330,000 French and British troops were encircled at Dunkirk, facing what seemed a terrible fate, but they were rescued by the British navy, in one of the war's most dramatic episodes, with the help of hundreds of small private boats. Most of the soldiers were delivered safely to British shores to fight another day, but they were obliged to leave tons of valuable military equipment on the beach.

The German forces then turned, full speed ahead, for Paris, but his time there was no miracle at the Marne, and the French, having suffered some 100,000 casualties, saw no point in further fighting. A new government, under the leadership of Marshal Philippe Pétain, a hero of the previous war, soon sued for peace. The French and British had not withstood the *Blitzkrieg* much longer than the Poles. The Maginot Line turned out to be irrelevant; the Germans never had to overrun it directly, and later attacked it from behind.

France was disgraced. Germany's military reputation reached new heights, and the future for Britain looked exceedingly bleak. Again, Hitler expected the British to come to terms. Instead, however, the British rallied to the leadership of Winston Churchill. He vowed to fight on, in speeches that became legendary: Generations to come, he proclaimed, would see this as Britain's "finest hour," even though ultimate victory over Nazism would cost "blood, toil, tears, and sweat." But, aside from his stirring rhetoric and indomitable belief in victory, Churchill offered something else, somewhat unexpected from a prominent right-wing politician who had once so lavishly praised Mussolini and for some time had remained cautiously open-minded about Hitler: a ringing indictment of the German Führer and his Nazi followers as so thoroughly evil that no compromise with them was conceivable. He described Nazism as exceeding "all forms of human wickedness in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression." No one, he observed, had been a more consistent opponent of the evils of Communism than he, but the horrors of Nazism were proving worse. (Perhaps more to the point, Soviet Russia had never seemed powerful enough to wage a war of conquest against Britain. But now Britain needed the evil Communists in order to stand up to the even more evil Nazis, who were fully intending to invade Britain. In short, yet another compromise with evil was necessary.)

Although the coordinated use of armored units and aircraft central to the *Blitzkrieg* was not applicable to the invasion of Britain, the opening battles constituted a new kind of warfare in that air power appeared crucial to any invasion plans. Britain's navy was still the world's most powerful, whereas Germany's smaller navy had been weakened in the April Norwegian campaign. In the end, the Battle of Britain became almost entirely an air battle, one of unrivaled scale and drama. Hermann Goering as head of the Luftwaffe (air force), made promises to Hitler that he was unable to keep. He assured his

Führer, a willing listener, that Britain could be reduced to submission by air attacks alone, making invasion easy or even unnecessary.

Many historians have concluded that, if Goering had stuck to the original plan of bombing Britain's airfields and radar stations, he might have succeeded in bringing Britain to its knees. Instead, he switched targets erratically, most significantly to bombing London, in revenge after British bombers staged night attacks on German cities in late August (attacks that in turn were in response to a German squadron's mistakenly dropping its load on London). Thereafter, the Luftwaffe targeted London relentlessly, from the second week of September to early November, killing some 15,000 people and nearly demolishing the House of Commons along with many other historic buildings.

But London was not a military target of the same significance at this point as airfields, radar stations, and defense industries. And the London "Blitz" did not drive the British to sue for peace. Meanwhile, Britain's factories in the rest of the country were steadily increasing their production of aircraft and other war materials. Similarly, Britain's impressive fighter planes, the Spitfires and the Hurricanes, linked to the effective use of a new technology, radar – the importance of which the Germans long failed to recognize – began to take a heavy toll on German aircraft. Again in Churchill's celebrated words: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Given Germany's heavy loss of aircraft and failure to gain the quick victories to which he had become accustomed, Hitler began to look elsewhere – or, really, to turn his full attention to the enterprise long closest to his heart – toward Soviet Russia. Already by mid-December 1940 he had given orders to his generals to prepare plans for an invasion of Russia, code-named "Operation Barbarossa." Hitler thus arrived at a stark violation of his own principle that Germany should never fight on two fronts. His first major setback, in the Battle of Britain, has come to appear the beginning of the end for the "infallible" Führer. Or perhaps it was simply that an addicted gambler's good luck cannot last, and Hitler kept on gambling. In the long run, his much-trumpeted "triumph of the will" ran into the "triumph of objective conditions," or even "the triumph of levelheaded decisions over impulsive ones." Nonetheless, a string of even-more-brilliant victories for Hitler's armies was yet to come, before the deeper flaws of the Führer's leadership and of the workings of the Nazi war machine began to make themselves felt.

The War against Judeo-Bolshevism

Hitler's wars in Poland and in western Europe had cost hundreds of thousands of lives, but they were over quickly and decisively, except for the protracted air war with Britain. The war with Russia was different. It would rage from late June 1941 until the spring of 1945, and its many ferocious battles far exceeded in deaths, wanton cruelty, and wholesale destruction all the battles up to then. This titanic clash of Nazi and Communist empires resulted in more death and destruction than any war in human history. Both Nazi and Soviet soldiers treated prisoners of war and the enemy civilian population with appalling inhumanity. The Nazi mistreatment and systematic murder of millions of people of "inferior race" during these four years of war came to rival – and surpass in raw intensity – the mass murder of "class enemies" by the Bolshevik regime in the

previous two decades. Nazi racial doctrines promoted heartless treatment of the *Untermenschen* (under-people, or inferior races), Slavs and Jews. The first were condemned to ethnic cleansing, the murder of its elites, and enslavement. The second were condemned to annihilation. This was a “war without mercy” on both sides, to borrow a phrase later famously applied to the Pacific War, where racial demonization also led both Americans and Japanese to numerous battlefield atrocities.

Before launching the attack on Russia, Hitler and his generals judged it important to secure their southern flank against a possible attack by the British through the Balkans. The *Blitzkrieg* was given yet another test, this time in a mostly mountainous Balkan terrain that seemed entirely unsuited to it. Yet again Germany’s armies were breathtakingly victorious. The attack on Yugoslavia began on April 6; Yugoslav military forces surrendered on April 17. Terror bombing of urban areas also got a new test: Belgrade, Yugoslavia’s capital, suffered around 20,000 civilian deaths in a single night. The German army then smashed into Greece, where Mussolini had been repulsed by the Greek army, thereafter capturing Crete in a brilliant paratrooper operation in late May.

The army that Hitler had gathered on Russia’s nearly 2000-mile western border by June 22 was the largest invasion force in history, some 175 divisions, over 3 million soldiers, 600,000 motor vehicles, and 750,000 horses. (By comparison, in 1812 Napoleon’s legendary Grand Army had consisted of 650,000 men in its invasion of Russia.) On the far north the invasion force included fourteen Finnish divisions, and to the south were smaller contingents of other armies allied with the Germans. The attack was launched along the entire frontier, but its main thrusts were again carried out by the German panzer divisions, and they quickly broke through enemy lines, racing into the interior. Much of the Soviet air force was caught on the ground and destroyed within the first days of the attack; confusion and panic reigned in the ranks of the Red Army.

That such an enormous military force could assemble on Russia’s borders and still enjoy a major element of surprise is to this day hard to understand. Stalin had repeatedly been warned about the gathering invasion force, but he had dismissed the warnings as inspired by the continuing efforts of Britain and France to instill distrust of his Nazi ally. It took him quite some time to recover from a paralyzing shock as news of defeat after defeat reached the Kremlin. Within the first hundred days of battle, over 3 million Red Army troops were killed, wounded, or captured. Many of those captured would subsequently die agonizing deaths of exposure to the elements, untreated war-wounds, and starvation in the Nazi prisoner-of-war camps. But thousands of the Red Army’s leading cadres were shot outright.

As in all of the battles since September 1939, the raw numbers of the opposing armies counted for less than the quality of military leadership, weapons, troop training, and battlefield tactics, in which the Germans excelled. The Red Army had twice as many planes and three times as many tanks as the German-led forces, but the morale of the Soviet soldiers at this point was relatively low, their leadership still inexperienced, and much of their weaponry of inferior quality. By November 1941 Nazi forces had driven to within twenty miles of Moscow, and the conclusion was only natural that Germany’s legendary military had prevailed, as they had from 1914 to 1918, over Russian forces that were larger in numbers but of inferior quality.

Another conclusion was also widely accepted: that Nazism, after having shown its superiority on the battlefield to a decadent western liberal democracy, was now demonstrating

an even more decisive superiority to Soviet Communism. Observers throughout Europe were impressed if not particularly surprised by Germany's string of battlefield victories from June to November 1941. There was also little surprise when news came that the Nazi invaders were being greeted as liberators in many areas of Soviet Russia. The horrors of collectivization were still fresh in the memory of the Ukrainian population, whereas memories of the German military forces that had occupied the area three decades before were generally favorable. The only recent example of the Red Army battle-readiness had been in the Winter War of 1939–40, and, for European observers who thought in racial terms, and many did, it was a case of predictions now being amply confirmed: Soviet Russia, a Slavic realm run by fanatical Jews, was destined to fail.

For much of 1941 and 1942, Hitler's Reich dominated Europe even more extensively and oppressively than Napoleon's empire had. The much-expanded boundaries of the Greater German Reich (*Grossdeutsches Reich*) now included Austria, much of Czechoslovakia, western Poland, and Alsace-Lorraine. Moreover, this Third Reich reigned over what Hitler already in 1940 had declared to be the New Order in Europe, a united states of Europe, including several categories of states: those occupied militarily (Poland, Denmark, Norway, northern France, Serbia, Greece); those formally allied with Germany (Italy, Finland, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania); and those considered friendly (Franco's Spain, Vichy France). Even formally neutral Sweden and Switzerland were careful not to seem unfriendly; Sweden continued to deliver vital raw materials, especially iron ore, to Germany throughout the war. By late 1941, extensive areas of European Russia, corresponding to Hitler's vision of *Lebensraum*, were in German hands. Given the resources now potentially available to the Greater German Reich, the earlier hope that Germany could be defeated by blockade seemed dashed. And, while Britain might successfully continue to defend itself for some time against an actual invasion, it could not seriously entertain the idea of invading the increasingly fortified Continent alone.

The Turning of the Tide

If Hitler had decided, in light of his extensive victories by the early autumn of 1941, to pull back to secure defensive lines for the winter and concentrate on consolidating his gains, the subsequent history of Europe might have been radically different. Such a period of rest and consolidation was eminently advisable, since the *Blitzkrieg* against the Soviets had again been based on short-term calculations – that is, on an overwhelming show of force and decisive victory within a few months. It did not include contingency plans for war extending throughout the winter, and certainly not for a war of attrition over several years. In the late autumn Germany's troops were exhausted by their exertions over such vast distances; their ranks were reduced by constant battle, and their supply lines had become dangerously overextended. Moreover, the Russian winter began to settle in, and German soldiers were not supplied with winter clothing, nor were German motorized units prepared for the extreme cold of the Russian winter. Their tanks and planes often hopelessly froze up.

Napoleon's defeat had been the result of many factors, among them overconfidence, overextended lines, the Russian winter, and the stubborn refusal of Russia's generals to accept defeat. There were some parallels with that precedent but also some important

differences: Stalin regained his composure, and in the first week of December 1941 the Red Army launched a major counteroffensive, driving the overconfident Germans back from Moscow. The German forces were actually not routed, but the German war machine, so far unbeatable on land, had met its first major setback, comparable to the setback in the air battle over Britain. By January the two exhausted armies had dug in for the winter.

December 1941 stands as a major turning point in several other regards. On December 7, the Japanese launched a devastating air attack on the United States navy at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Nazi Germany, allied with Japan since 1936, declared war on the United States four days later. That declaration now seems strangely ill-considered but had something in common with the calculations of the German generals in 1917, in that Hitler and his military advisers did not believe that the United States could mobilize with adequate speed to make a difference in Europe's war. In a perverse sense, Hitler did President Roosevelt (and, even more, Churchill) a favor, for without a declaration of war by Germany the United States might well have avoided or postponed direct engagement in the European conflict, concentrating on the defeat of Japan. Instead, Roosevelt and his advisers arrived at a major strategic decision: to make the defeat of Germany its highest priority, which meant a massive increase in aid to Britain, since if the British Isles fell into Nazi hands the notion of an eventual invasion of Germany by the United States would have appeared hopeless.

By early December 1941, the United States was hardly a neutral power, even if most Americans still strongly opposed entering another European war. After the failures of appeasement, the shock of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and Germany's declaration of war against Poland, the ranks of those Americans who admired Nazi Germany thinned out considerably. By the time of the Battle of Britain, American sympathies were unmistakably against the Nazis, even if most Americans still hoped to avoid becoming entangled in another world war.

Already a year before, in December 1940, President Roosevelt had publicly declared that "the best immediate defense of the United States is the success of Britain in defending itself." In early March 1941, the US Congress passed the Lend Lease Act, permitting the sale or lease of war materials "to any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States." By the summer of 1941 the American government had begun preparations for war by drafting over a million men and launching a major program of ship-building. After Germany attacked Russia in late June 1941, Lend Lease was extended to Russia. In mid-August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill secretly met and agreed to the Atlantic Charter, which looked to "the final destruction of Nazi tyranny" and promised to support "the rights of all people to choose the form of government under which they shall live." (However, in the next month, Churchill observed in a speech that the Charter applied only to people under *German* occupation, not those under British rule.)

It was suggested above that Hitler's alleged triumph of the will was ultimately countered by a triumph of reasonable decisions over his impulsive ones. Even the German reputation for efficiency turned out, under Nazi rule, to be less deserved than widely assumed. The Third Reich and the New Order were plagued by the rivalries between competing agencies and personalities, to say nothing of simple incompetence and corruption, especially on the part of the Nazi chieftains who had taken over ill-defined

positions of power. (Some British leaders actually opposed plans to assassinate Hitler because they believed he was a British “secret weapon”; with him gone, more competent leadership might have prevailed.)

After the Red Army’s December counteroffensive, Hitler began to give orders that implicitly envisaged planning for a longer war, but for some time Germany’s economy and society remained less completely and efficiently mobilized for war than was Britain’s. More surprising, the Soviet economy, in spite of the country’s staggering losses in the summer and autumn of 1941, ultimately proved capable of a remarkable rebound, eventually producing materials for war more abundantly and effectively than the German New Order did. Even in terms of quality, the Soviets began putting weaponry in the field, notably tanks and artillery, that effectively countered the reputation of the inveterate inferiority of Russian or Communist products. In short, the Russian winter, while certainly an important factor, was not a truly decisive one in the success of Russia’s counteroffensive. Even in terms of the combat quality of the two opposing armies, something closer to equality began to emerge, as newly placed Soviet generals found their footing and the battle-readiness of the Red Army recruits grew.

In yet another regard, December 1941 has been seen as a decisive turning point: It was the month in which Hitler’s order for the Final Solution was most likely given, if there ever was a single, overall order. This presumed turning point was linked to a program-shaping new reality: Nazi Germany had thrown its net over several million more Jews. If there had previously been uncertainty or divided counsel about how to solve the Jewish Question, now a more comprehensive (not necessarily coherent) move toward mass murder emerged. However, this date is problematic, since mass murder of Jews had begun before December 1941. The so-called “Commissar Order” of six months earlier, on June 6, 1941, explicitly set down that “any Soviet political commissars” that were discovered among the prisoners of war were to be “shot immediately.” It was further ordered that “all prisoners of war” who could be identified as “thoroughly Bolshevized” should also be put to death immediately.

A few of Hitler’s generals (Rommel, most notably), balked at the open-ended criminality of this order. It was nonetheless an order that, given Nazi ideology, easily merged into a license to murder any and all Jews under Nazi control. The so-called *Einsatzgruppen* (action squads), not under regular military command, killed hundreds of thousands of Jews, including women, children, and the aged. These squads were special armed detachments, set up by Himmler’s SS in 1939, with the charge to follow the advancing regular armies, wiping out any continued resistance behind the lines. In the war with Poland, the *Einsatzgruppen* had focused on Polish leaders but had also included Jews; now the main focus was Soviet leaders and Jews.

These mass executions were carried out “in the field,” not in the concentration or extermination camps. They were often assisted by antisemitic locals, who welcomed a chance to take vengeance on their former Communist oppressors or those reviled as “Jewish commissars.” These deaths involved killing in the “ordinary” and messy ways that partisans or guerrillas had been put to death in the past wars. But the scale now was greater and the murders more centrally directed.

The extent to which these in-the-field murders then evolved into something more fully unprecedented in scope and design – that is, mechanized mass murder – has been the subject of much scholarly debate. The Nazis’ use of modern industrial methods in

the concentration camps, poison gas most notoriously, may in fact have resulted finally in fewer deaths than the atrocious conditions in the camps and ghettos, which involved rampant disease, exposure to the elements, malnutrition, overwork, and “ordinary” executions by shooting or hanging.

By the spring of 1942, a number of extermination camps, not merely concentration camps, had been constructed in Poland. Concentration camps for political dissidents had existed in Germany since 1933, and similar camps had been used by other nations before that (e.g., by the British in the Boer War, and by the Spanish in Cuba). Many thousands died in the initial variety of Nazi camps, especially in the last stages of the war, but thousands had also died in the British and Spanish camps, again mostly from disease, malnutrition, and exposure to the elements. Camps designed with the explicit goal of murdering an entire people, race, or category of humanity as rapidly and efficiently as possible – without regard to individual guilt – had fewer if any precedents. The camps or gulags of the Soviet Union would seem to qualify as a close second to the extermination camps of Nazi Germany. Being sent to a gulag was widely considered tantamount to a death sentence, though, again, death in the Soviet gulags came through brutal treatment, neglect, disease, or an executioner’s bullet and not factory-style mass murder. Still, in terms of their ideological fanaticism and indifference to human suffering or individual guilt, the actions taken by Soviet authorities against the “kulaks as a class” – or against various “seditious” ethnic minorities – were very close to those taken against the “Jews as a race” by the Nazis.

Victories at Stalingrad and the Kursk Salient

It has been speculated that by December 1941 the likelihood of defeat had begun to gnaw into Hitler’s consciousness; looming defeat at that point allegedly had much to do with his decision to order that all Jews under Nazi control be put to death as rapidly as possible. He had failed to bring down the British; the Red Army had successfully counterattacked; and now the “Jewish-controlled” United States was fully in the war. Hitler concluded, so the speculation goes, that he still had the power to win his war against the Jews, since millions of them were completely under his power.

The priority of that war in Hitler’s mind, however, remains difficult to determine, as do the specific orders he may have given. There is evidence that he and other Nazi leaders at times diverted vital resources away from the battlefields on the eastern front and toward the extermination camps, but the matter is mired in baffling complexities and seeming contradictions – typical of the Nazi Reich as a whole, where, behind a public image of efficiency and order, the reality was contradiction, irrationality, and bureaucratic chaos. At any rate, the death camps went into high gear in 1942 and 1943, and it is extremely difficult to imagine that such a massive undertaking would have proceeded without supporting directives from Hitler.

A further complicating factor is that, by the spring of 1942, the Führer had turned his main attention to another all-out attack against the Red Army, this time concentrating on southern Russia. And yet again, in the summer of 1942, Nazi armies went from victory to victory in their drive toward the oil fields of the Caucasus Mountains region.

But those armies were then halted at what seemed the last possible moment, at Stalingrad, on the Volga, near the Caspian Sea, and this time the Red Army's counter-offensive was considerably more decisive than it had been in the battles outside Moscow in the previous year. In November, Red Army forces encircled some 240,000 exhausted and poorly provisioned German troops, and – to Hitler's utter outrage – their general, Friedrich von Paulus, surrendered. Only 90,000 soldiers, including twenty-four generals, were still alive by late January 1943, when the surrender occurred. Most of them would not live to see Germany again.

The Battle of Stalingrad ranks as one of the most destructive in modern history. Over a million Soviet soldiers and civilians died in the desperate five-month struggle, but the battle became even more famous for its potent symbolism: To the astonishment of much of the rest of the world, Communism seemed to be defeating Nazism. The famous Russian Civil War song could now be more confidently sung: "The Red Army is the most powerful of all!" The sense of a decisively turning tide in 1942–3 was enhanced by news that the tank warfare in North Africa against the "desert fox," Erwin Rommel, by late autumn 1942 had also begun to turn in favor of the British and rapidly arriving Americans, although only after Rommel had delivered a series of alarming defeats on the British in the early summer of that year. Similarly, until the first months of 1943, German submarines had been taking a frightful toll on ships from America to Britain, but thereafter, in part because of technological advances in detecting submarines and an effective convoy system, a growing number of American ships began arriving in British harbors. (In the Pacific, too, the defeat of the Japanese in the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942–3 was seen as a sign of a turning tide, with important further implications for the European front, in that the Japanese front was now less likely to draw Red Army forces away from the battle against Germany.)

Overall, the story of World War II in Europe from early 1943 to June 1945 was one of Nazi retreat. But it was not by any means a rout; fierce battles all along the eastern front continued in the following two years, most famously the battle in July and August 1943 around the Kursk salient (or westward bulge of territory), occupied by the Red Army. This battle witnessed the greatest clash of tanks in history. It also marked the costliest single day of aerial warfare in history. Perhaps most symbolically, it was the first major battle in which the celebrated German panzer units failed to break through enemy defenses. In short, by land and by sea, in the air and in arenas where the German military had been most feared, the Nazi Reich had begun to suffer defeat after defeat.

Further Reading

John Keegan's *The Second World War* (1990) is widely considered one of the best general accounts.

Gordon Wright (the author of *Modern France*) pays special attention to deeper, structural issues, rather than colorful descriptions of battles, in *The Ordeal of Total War, 1939–45* (1990; 1st ed. 1968).

Mention has been made of Niall Ferguson's *The Pity of War* (1999). He is also the author of the similarly provocative *The War of the World* (2007), which covers both World War I and World War II in Europe and Asia.

Part V

Europe in Recovery and the Cold War

1943–89 and Beyond

Compared to the previous calamitous three decades, the four and a half decades after the war's end (1945–1989) were ones of remarkable economic recovery, with no general war. The two and a half decades after the end of the Cold War (1989–2012) witnessed previously unimaginable changes in those lands where Communists had ruled but also in western Europe, which took major steps toward economic union. Perhaps most unimaginably, Germany was allowed to reunify. The new German Reich was decidedly smaller than Bismarck's had been, but it nonetheless became Europe's most populous and economically productive country.

It was increasingly evident, from the victory at Stalingrad in January 1943, that the days of the Third Reich were numbered. The final triumph of the Allied powers in the summer of 1945 was exhilarating for many Europeans, but nonetheless widespread despair and hopelessness characterized the first few years after the end of the war, especially as it seemed that another war was building, this time possibly involving atomic bombs or other weapons of massive destruction. But, although the simmering tensions between the former Allied victors flared up ominously from time to time, they ultimately remained short of general war in Europe. In crisis after crisis, Europeans feared that an atomic holocaust was approaching, but for the next half-century the war that Europeans experienced remained mostly “cold.” Despite much threatening rhetoric and many ominous military buildups, the dreaded clash of large armies and the bombing of cities, with mass civilian deaths, failed to develop in Europe, with partial exceptions after the end of the Cold War, in the Balkans. Similarly, the initial passions of the Cold War tended to diminish over the course of those four and a half decades; the attachment of Europeans to competing ideologies gradually diversified and weakened, especially in the Communist camp. The end of the Soviet empire, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, came more with a whimper than a bang.

The healing process in Communist-dominated eastern Europe was less rapid, efficient, and complete than in western, free-market Europe, and ultimately that difference became a decisive factor in the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989–91. Still, compared to most non-European areas of the world, eastern Europe evolved into a region of material comfort and physical security. Disputes continued about the best way to manage modern economies, in western Europe in particular about how far the welfare state should expand in attempting to mitigate the destructive aspects of the free market and how much that market needed to be preserved to encourage economic dynamism. Even in the Communist-ruled states, major differences appeared about how best to manage the economy, and even there “capitalist” incentives crept in. But the economies of nearly all European nations were extensively rebuilt. Bombed-out cities were gradually restored. Millions of acres were replanted. It was the greatest period of material betterment in European history.

No doubt the Europeans’ relative power and sense of self changed in major and permanent ways. Europe’s preeminent world position before 1914 was taken over by the United States and, to a lesser degree, the Soviet Union, but those two non-European or semi-European powers could themselves be considered largely offshoots of European civilization. Still, the shadow of the previous period of European history was dark and chilling; growing numbers of Europeans, especially those born after 1945, came to view their past in fundamentally different ways. The difference was suggested by the appearance of the phrase “mastering the past,” as distinguished from the more familiar “learning the lessons of history”; the latter tended to focus on blaming “others,” whereas increasingly the emphasis began to turn to introspection and self-mastery, even self-blame.

In a related way, the Holocaust eventually emerged as a major theme, for some observers *the* major theme, of modern European history. A tendency appeared among some historians to situate the roots of the Holocaust deep in Europe’s Christian past, or even to see European history as uniquely tainted, building toward genocide and self-destruction.

A byproduct of this painful self-examination was that Europe by the 1980s came to rank among the most tolerant areas of the world, as well as one of the most prosperous. The tolerance and self-criticism of Europeans had definite limits – right-wing movements of nationalist resentment reappeared – but the overall openness of the intellectual climate, especially in Europe’s liberal-democratic states, was nonetheless impressive in comparison to previous periods, even more so in contrast to much of the rest of the world. Europe’s nations became places of refuge for millions of non-Europeans, fleeing dictatorships, ethnic or religious persecution, and, perhaps most of all, poverty.

The movement toward European unity touched on a range of issues, from relatively concrete economic ones to more elusive ones of nationalist attachment, ethical values, and legal norms. Europeans had for centuries cultivated a loose sense of common identity in “Christendom” and then as part of the European concert of nations, with various kinds of economic and cultural ties. Revulsion over the tragedies of 1914 to 1945 had much to do with the move toward greater unity, as did the ensuing Cold War, at least insofar as it pulled formerly hostile countries together, most

notably France and Germany, against a common Communist threat. In eastern Europe, too, one effect of the expansion of the Soviet empire was to put a lid on eastern-European hypernationalism.

The many-staged story of the efforts to achieve economic integration was largely one of success, if hard-earned and tenuous at times. Nationalist antipathies in Europe did decline significantly, but even by the early twenty-first century a single dominant European identity, one that decisively subordinated existing national identities to a larger European one, remained an ever-receding prospect, regarded as neither feasible nor desirable by a substantial proportion of Europeans.

The year 1968 has often been compared to 1848; the closest parallels have to do with unrealistic hopes dashed. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the worst economic slump since the war, catalyzed by the oil embargo that was instituted by Arab nations following the war with Israel in 1973 but also reflecting other economic trends. There were significant shifts in these years in the nature of the Cold War; the bipolarity of earlier years continued to dissolve, as Soviet Bloc countries were allowed to inch away from strict supervision by Soviet leaders, and western-European democracies distanced themselves from the kind of leadership exercised by the United States in the earlier Cold War years. However, the late 1970s and early 1980s also saw renewed tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, as both presidents Carter and Reagan pushed a more aggressive foreign policy, with a stress on the issue of human rights in the Soviet Union and on competing military budgets.

It is clearer in retrospect than it was at the time that the cracks in the structure of Communist rule in eastern Europe were widening precariously. When Mikhail Gorbachev took over leadership of the Soviet Union in 1985, the entire structure of Communist rule was on the edge of collapse. Previous Soviet leaders had tolerated Communist diversity up to a point, so long as the leading role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was recognized, but Gorbachev's toleration was ultimately extended to the point of no longer insisting on that role. The late 1980s witnessed the collapse of European Communism and the beginning of a new era of modern history.

21 Victory, Peace, Punishment

1943–6

By the second half of 1943, titanic shifts in power were underway: The Thousand-Year Reich turned out to last only twelve years; the European New Order was barely established before it started to unravel. The initially humiliated but much-underestimated Red Army continued its relentless westward drive, while the American giant began to flex its muscles, supplying Britain and Russia with vital materials. The first actual landing of American troops was in north Africa (November 1942), followed by Sicily (July 1943) and then the long-awaited major landing at Normandy (D-day, June 1944), which was in turn followed by another landing in southern France in August. Final victory in Europe, VE-day, came in early May 1945.

The future shape of Europe was at this point anyone's guess. Uncertain, too, was how to deal with the Nazis and those allied with them – leaders and masses, military and civilian. The full extent of the atrocities committed during the war was still unknown, and the deeper meaning of those atrocities as yet not searchingly explored; “the Holocaust” was a term that had not yet established itself, and the efforts of the postwar tribunals at Nuremberg to achieve some sort of justice left many dissatisfied, if not indignant.

The Problems and Paradoxes of Victory

The shape of the postwar European world emerged out of these shifting relations of power, and even a year after the end of the war much remained up in the air. The Atlantic Charter of mid-August 1941 had stressed liberal-democratic values and the goal of the complete destruction of Nazism, but at that point the United States was not

in the war; even after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, the exact orchestration of the war against Nazi Germany was only gradually being worked out.

The issue of the postwar settlement was all the more problematic in that the historical records of the Americans and British themselves were inconsistent with the principles of the Atlantic Charter. But even more of a problem was the Soviet Union's long-standing and quite explicit rejection of those principles. Could allies as diverse in values, goals, and historical experience – or as hypocritical in self-description – as these three arrive at more than temporary and opportunistic agreements? The pressures of war resulted in teeth-gritting compromises between Communists and anti-Communists, but more surprising was the affection and mutual admiration of the Big Three (as they were called) for one another – especially of Churchill and Roosevelt for Stalin; there is less reliable evidence in regard to Stalin's actual feelings about them.

The discredited notion of collective national guilt was now being replaced with the notion of the individual guilt of Nazi "war criminals." But again there was no little awkwardness: Could it be concluded that "the people" led by those war criminals were then to be considered free of guilt, or even themselves victims of Nazi tyranny? Similarly, how exactly were the concepts of responsible leadership and criminality to be defined? In truth, many in the Allied camp still believed in the collective guilt – and the peculiar viciousness – of the German people. That belief implied that collective punishment – and one far harsher than was meted out in 1919 – was justified. However, while there were still millions of ardent Nazis in the German population and many millions more who continued to revere Hitler's memory, not all of them were guilty of criminal actions. Millions of others claimed to have silently rejected Nazi actions, but they had done little or nothing to oppose them. What was to be done in regard to these various and overlapping categories?

Many German soldiers, whether or not formally Nazis, had committed acts of unspeakable brutality, but finding them guilty of war crimes was complicated not only by definitional problems (what *is* a war crime?) but also by the issue of their being given criminal orders by their officers, who were themselves following criminal directives from the leaders of the Nazi state. The Atlantic Charter supported "the rights of *all peoples* to choose the form of government under which they shall live," but the application of that ideal in the immediate postwar period would prove to be far from consistent, since few if any in the Allied camp at war's end believed that those millions of Nazis should be given the right to choose a new government.

The paradoxes of Wilsonian ideals of national self-determination were already familiar, as was the notion that the Germans were not to be given the same rights of self-determination as other peoples. More complicated still was the situation of various eastern-European peoples. Many had collaborated with Nazi Germany – some enthusiastically – and, if allowed to choose their form of government after the war, they would almost certainly have voted for extreme nationalist, anti-Soviet, and antisemitic ones. Having such right-wing neighbors was not something the Soviets were likely to accept. And what was the actual meaning of the Atlantic Charter for those millions throughout the world yearning to be free of European imperial rule? Indeed, what about the citizens of the United States of African origin, or the Arab majority in Palestine, both of whom would continue, long after the end of the war, to be denied the right to vote for the form of government under which they lived. Viable answers to the above



Figure 21.1 Nazis arresting Jews in Warsaw Ghetto. Frightened Jewish families surrender to Nazi soldiers at the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. In January of that year, the residents of the ghetto rose against the Nazis and held their ground for several months, but were defeated after fierce fighting in April and May. Photo from Jürgen Stroop's report to Heinrich Himmler from May 1943. *Source:* Wikimedia Commons.

questions turned out to be much more complicated than simply giving people the right to vote and letting the chips fall where they may. The devil is in the details.

By the outbreak of war in 1939, few disputed the criminal nature of the Third Reich, even if precise definitions were lacking, and war-time propaganda amply bolstered the view of Germans as inherently criminal. But the dimensions of that criminality became apparent only after the end of the war, and the full dimensions not for many years after that. There had been many reports of Nazi atrocities during the war, and threats to punish war criminals thundered from Allied leaders. But there was also a certain reticence to believe all of those reports, in part because of the notorious exaggerations and fabrications on all sides during and after World War I. Many of the war-time reports appeared beyond belief, or at least evoked a revulsion so profound as to numb the ability to understand.

Planning for Victory

No peace conference comparable to the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15 or the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 was convened immediately after World War II. However, a series of remarkable war-time conferences of the Allies was held to coordinate the war

effort and work out the principles to be applied to the postwar settlement. These conferences ultimately served as a *de facto* peace settlement, though one so flawed that within a few years the suppressed war-time tensions between the great powers emerged to take on threatening forms. As at the Congress of Vienna and the Paris Peace Conference, these meetings witnessed a clash of strong personalities and seemingly irreconcilable national interests. At the four most famous of the conferences, at Casablanca, Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam, “personal diplomacy” played a key role. The photos taken of the seated leaders at those conferences have achieved iconic status, mostly because those leaders – termed “war lords” by one prominent historian – exercised powers far exceeding those of the leaders at Vienna in 1815 and Paris in 1919.

The face-to-face encounters between Churchill and Stalin were particularly remarkable in that Churchill had been known as one of the most intransigent anti-Communists in the world. However, by the time of the Battle of Britain, Churchill, as noted above, was describing Nazism as a form of rule that exceeded “all forms of human wickedness,” including Communism. As he began to take the threat of Nazi Germany seriously, he moved toward the belief that an alliance with the Soviet Union was the only effective way to counter that threat. Once Nazi Germany had attacked the Soviet Union, Churchill took immediate steps to form an alliance with those Communists he had previously also described as exceeding all forms of human wickedness. Indeed, he not only dropped his earlier anti-Communism but began to deliver praise – with terms even more glowing than he had once offered for Mussolini and Fascism – for Stalin’s leadership and for the accomplishments of the Soviet system. In private Churchill even expressed a decided personal affection for the “old bear,” Stalin.

Stalin missed the first planned conference of the Allied leaders, at Casablanca (Morocco) in January 1943, but thereafter the Big Three met twice, first at Tehran (Iran) in late November 1943 and then at Yalta (Soviet Union) in February 1945. Roosevelt died a month after Yalta, in April 1945, before the July conference at Potsdam (after Germany’s defeat but while the war continued with Japan). He was replaced by his vice-president, Harry S. Truman. Churchill was voted out of office in the mid-July British elections, as the Potsdam conference was in progress, to be replaced by the Labour leader, Clement Attlee.

The Grand Alliance of the United States, Great Britain, and Soviet Russia dated from January 1942. Roosevelt and war-time propagandists in the United States before long were also praising the “gallant Soviet people” and their leader, “Uncle Joe” Stalin. The public language of anti-Axis, liberal-democratic values that came to be associated with the Grand Alliance had a distinct resemblance to the language of the anti-fascist Popular Front from 1936 to 1939. But those turned out to be years of failure and disillusionment, and they were followed by nearly two years of a Nazi–Communist coalition. Such quite recent precedents tended to taint any entirely sincere renewal of pro-Soviet rhetoric, at least for anyone with a memory extending more than five years. Although a brave face prevailed from early 1942 to the end of the war, it was hard to ignore that the Grand Alliance was composed of those who had recently been bitter enemies, now abruptly pushed together by the threat from a greater common enemy, Nazi Germany (and Germany’s ally, imperial Japan). The Allies stayed together until those enemies were defeated, but not much longer.

The significant political and personal differences between Churchill and Roosevelt remained relatively low-key and hidden from the public; the two men developed a cooperative

relationship and a guarded friendship. Churchill traveled to Washington in late December 1941 and spent three weeks with the American president in the White House, discussing war strategies and working on what would become the Atlantic Charter of August 1942. (The president's wife, Eleanor, wrote to her daughter that the British prime minister was "lovable, emotional, and very human" but drank too much and kept her husband up all hours of the night. She had doubts, moreover, about how reliable the British leader would be in making a genuinely democratic peace, doubts shared by her husband.)

The Casablanca conference, meeting January 14–24, 1943, was called to ratify a number of emerging but still hotly contested decisions about the overall strategy of the war in Europe. Churchill and Roosevelt reached an agreement that unconditional surrender would be demanded of the Axis powers, a key decision insofar as it implicitly ruled out a separate, negotiated peace with Germany, but this decision was criticized by some advisers for making it likely that the Germans would fight to the bitter end, prolonging the war and unnecessarily costing many lives. The demand for unconditional surrender also reflected the belief that the Allies were fighting absolute evil; they could not sully the purity of their cause by compromising with it.

Stalin did not make it to the conference, largely because his country was still waging a life-and-death struggle for survival at Stalingrad. However, he had previously made known, in a series of communications, his alarm at the possibility that the British and Americans would make a separate peace with Nazi Germany. That alarm was linked to his suspicion that the reason the British and Americans repeatedly postponed the date of establishing a second front in western Europe was to let the German and Soviet armies battle on as long as possible, fatally weakening one another. This suspicion in turn related to Stalin's earlier belief that the real motive behind the policy of appeasement had been to encourage Hitler to turn to the east. These suspicions were consistent with Stalin's Marxist worldview, to say nothing of his own well-known inclinations to paranoia (though there is little doubt, as previously noted, that many Western leaders *did* hope that Nazis and Communists would destroy one another).

There was, nonetheless, ample cause to postpone establishing the western front. Moving whole armies across the English Channel would be far from easy, and Nazi Germany's *Festung Europa* (European Fortress) along the French coastline was deemed by many observers to be next to impossible to breach. But the point that impressed Stalin and his advisers, as the war on the eastern front stretched on and on, was that the Red Army was shouldering the heaviest burden of the war – that the Nazis and Soviets *were* destroying one another. Even after the landings in North Africa, Italy, and finally Normandy, there was little question that the most costly battles by a considerable measure continued to be waged on the eastern front. Hitler continued to station some three-quarters of his armed forces there, even after the Normandy landing. Churchill later stated the matter with characteristic verve: "It was the Red Army that tore the guts out of the Nazi war machine." In the process the Red Army and the Soviet civilian population had their own guts badly torn, which the Soviet leaders stressed in general terms but masked in detail, since by the end of the war they had suffered such terrible losses that they felt vulnerable to the Anglo-Americans.

Those fundamental truths, in particular this disproportion of suffering, cast long shadows. The war-time conferences stood in those shadows, as did the immediate postwar years. Such was all the more the case since the armies of the Western Allies

generally made slow progress and suffered a few shocking reverses. Although the battles in north Africa had turned in favor of the British and Americans by early 1943, progress there had been much slower than anticipated, and such would be the frequent refrain – “slower than anticipated” – for the next two years of Anglo-American advance in Italy, France, and Germany.

Personal Diplomacy and Realpolitik

Roosevelt deemed it crucial to meet personally with Stalin, convinced that, face to face, he could allay the suspicions of the steely dictator. He believed, in short, that with his much-acclaimed personal charm he could persuade Stalin that the capitalist world, or at least the American element of that world, would not act in the way that Communist doctrine declared it inevitably would act. That was a tall order, but, if it had any prospect of success, Roosevelt understood that he needed to show great sensitivity to Stalin's concerns by avoiding confrontations or dwelling on the unhappy recent past. Roosevelt was particularly hopeful that he could win Stalin over to a vision of the postwar world in which the major powers, capitalist and Communist, would cooperate in keeping the peace – again a vision that would not make much sense to a convinced Marxist, and even less to a man of Stalin's personal temperament.

Stalin's suspicion that the culturally close and personally friendly Roosevelt and Churchill would cooperate against him proved unjustified. In fact, something like the opposite occurred, in that they both tried to enlist Stalin's support against the other. Roosevelt confidentially informed Stalin that he agreed with the Communists that Europe's imperial holdings should be dismantled after the war. Churchill, for whom the preservation of the British Empire was a top priority, in his own private conversations with Stalin at Tehran referred slightly to the naiveté of the Americans in foreign affairs, so unlike the more realistic attitudes of the British and Soviets.

The meeting at Tehran was from November 28 to December 1, 1943. This was the first time that Stalin had left Soviet territory since he took power. The meeting was remarkable for the peculiar tone of the informal exchanges between the Big Three – perhaps more than for the nature of the formal decisions ultimately reached. There was, first of all, a certain symbolism in how far Roosevelt and Churchill were willing to go, physically, to accommodate their Communist ally, since he remained stubbornly unwilling to do more than step over the Soviet border, while they had to travel thousands of miles. Most of the meetings were held in the Soviet rather than the American or British embassies, in part to satisfy Stalin's concern that his own people would be in charge of security. There was yet further symbolism in Churchill's presentation, at an elaborate banquet, of a specially prepared sword of honor, a personal gift from King George VI to the citizens of Stalingrad and the people of the Soviet Union. Stalin accepted the sword, giving it a ceremonial kiss. He offered no comparable gift to the American or British people or their leaders.

Nonetheless, Stalin too avoided direct confrontations. He certainly wanted to retain his British and American allies, and it might be argued that Stalin was the one who proved the most charming, or the most effective in personal diplomacy, seeming to persuade his capitalist interlocutors that he was, after all, a modest, reasonable sort – and had a good sense of humor as well. In retrospect, the Tehran conference had an aura of

unreality: Roosevelt believed he could convince Stalin, the leader of the Communist world, that Marxist theory was flawed and that capitalist leaders could be trusted; Stalin strived to convince Roosevelt and Churchill, leaders of the capitalist world and firm anti-Communists only a few years before, that he was a worthy ally, with whom one could confidently plan the future.

That Stalin's goal was not unrealistic is evident in a statement made by Roosevelt to an adviser who had strongly urged caution in regard to the Soviet leader:

I just have a hunch that Stalin is not that kind of a man I think that if I give him everything I possibly can and ask for nothing from him in return ... he won't try to annex anything and will work with me for a world of democracy and peace.

Churchill, supposedly less naive, nonetheless seemed to be of much the same opinion, commenting, after several meetings with Stalin: "Poor Neville Chamberlain believed he could trust Hitler. He was wrong, but I don't think I am wrong about Stalin."

Much of the oddly playful repartee by the Big Three at Tehran appears similarly unreal: Stalin repeatedly needled Churchill about his long anti-Communist past. The



Figure 21.2 The Big Three: Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Josef Stalin at the Yalta Conference, February 4–11, 1945. *Source:* © Trinity Mirror / Mirrorpix / Alamy.

normally pugnacious and articulate Churchill replied feebly, "Have you forgiven me?" Stalin, the militant atheist, replied: "Only God can forgive." When Stalin at one point proposed that 50,000 to 100,000 German staff officers be shot summarily at war's end, Churchill demurred, while Roosevelt suggested a compromise: perhaps only 49,000? Stalin had overseen the arrests and execution of thousands of his own military leaders, and in the spring of 1940 he had approved the murder of thousands of Polish officers. The notion of putting thousands of German officers to death was thus hardly a large step for him, but the Big Three at Tehran finally postponed decisions about the exact punishments to be meted out to Nazi military officers.

As in 1814–15 and 1919, the problem of Poland proved particularly nettlesome, threatening to divide the Big Three irreparably. Again, they postponed binding decisions. Even at Yalta in February 1945, more than a year after the Tehran meeting, there was much hedging about what a new Poland would be like, and the wording that was worked out was transparently contradictory to anyone familiar with Polish realities: There were to be free elections, but Poland was to remain "friendly" to the Soviet Union. Stalin understood only too well that the mass of Poland's population was deeply anti-Russian and even more deeply anti-Communist. Obviously, a regime in Poland that would be friend to the Soviet Union could not also be a democratically elected one; "friendship" would have to be guaranteed by the Red Army and the Soviet secret police.

Stalin's main concern was to get a firm commitment for the Anglo-American landing in western Europe, and that concern was more or less satisfied at Tehran, after so many postponements: It would be in early May of 1944, about six months away. Roosevelt did get one concession: a further, if still tentative, statement from Stalin in support of the United Nations Organization. (Later, at Yalta, Stalin would declare his full support for what had, by that time, become a more clearly defined organization. Its first meeting would occur in San Francisco in the spring of 1945, with forty-four founding nations in its General Assembly, but decisive influence was left in the hands of five major powers, each given a permanent seat in the fifteen-member Security Council: the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and France.)

Stalin agreed to go along with the creation of the United Nations in part because of Soviet Russia's devastated condition by the last year of the war. He was a firm believer in foreign policy "realism" (or *realpolitik*), which included the long-established rights of military conquest. He later observed to a Yugoslav Communist: "Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise." When Churchill traveled to Moscow in mid-October 1944 (without Roosevelt), he proposed measures to Stalin that he admitted would shock "the Americans, including the president, ... by dividing Europe into spheres": In Romania, the Soviet Union would have 90 percent influence, Britain 10 percent; in Greece Britain would have 90 percent, Russia 10 percent; other areas were to be 75–25 or 50–50 percent.

The figures – and the entirety of this "naughty" proposal (the word Churchill used in describing it to Stalin) – had no binding effect, but they did starkly illustrate his belief that the realities of military power were more significant than the right of peoples to choose their own governments. Stalin agreed. It must be said that even Roosevelt, for all his own professed commitment to popular rule early in the war, was also persuaded that any future international organization could be successful in preserving the peace only after the United States and Britain had operated as a kind of police force for several

years, quashing potentially aggressive nations. As Roosevelt's vision of the United Nations took a more precise shape, he continued to insist that the world's great powers, now including the Soviet Union, be placed in substantial control of it, and not the nations of the world.

Winning the War: Myths and Realities

Few if any European nations can be said to have believed in free elections everywhere. To an important extent, the Americans, too, after the war imposed their own system of government "as far as their army could reach," making sure that friendly regimes were established in those areas, such as Italy, that had a large Communist following but where the American army (and intelligence services) exercised control. This establishment of American-style democracy was no doubt less blatant than Soviet-style democracy, in part because the rich Americans and liberal democracy were more popular in western Europe than the impoverished Soviets and Communism were in eastern Europe.

American power, economic and military, contributed to the victory of the Entente in World War I, and that power would again provide an important tilt to the balance in World War II – if, in both cases, less than Americans were later inclined to believe. The landing in western Europe was widely expected to be a particularly decisive display of that American power, and Hitler's last hope to survive seemed to be based on Germany's ability to repel the landing. He professed to believe the Anglo-American leaders would sue for peace if the landing failed. In fact, for some time the success of the landing appeared in doubt. The weather cooperated, more or less, on June 6, after a last-minute postponement on a stormy June 5. Because of the bad weather, the Germans, ironically, were not at their highest level of alert, and the Anglo-American forces were able to achieve a crucial element of surprise. The Germans were, moreover, successfully deceived into believing that the main landing would occur in the Pas-de-Calais area, the shortest route across the English Channel, whereas it actually occurred to the south, in Normandy.

Some of the battles along the Normandy coast, notably at Omaha Beach, were fierce and bloody. Total casualties for the Anglo-American forces in the landing were approximately 10,000, of which over half were fatalities. Losses on the German side were about the same, but, compared to any of the major battles on the eastern front, these were not large figures. The landing, which was touch and go for a while, did achieve its main goal: In the three-month period after June 6, some 2.2 million men and a half-million military vehicles were brought across the Channel. On June 22, the Red Army launched its own major offensive on the northern edge of the eastern front, with over a hundred divisions (each with 10,000 to 30,000 soldiers) and 4000 tanks. Within a month, by late July, the Red Army had pushed Nazi lines back nearly to Warsaw, advancing some 350 miles and inflicting over a half-million casualties.

Again, differences even at this point between the eastern and western fronts were considerable. After establishing a secure beachhead, the Anglo-American forces moved slowly. However well provisioned, the American army consisted to a significant degree of raw recruits, and they faced battle-hardened opponents. In December, the German military launched its own version of a winter counteroffensive, this time catching the

Americans by surprise, in what came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge, in the area of the Ardennes Forest – where Germany's armies had so famously broken through in the spring of 1940. The Americans suffered some 90,000 casualties before the counter-offensive was halted and contained.

Anglo-American forces, as they liberated French territory, were gradually being supplemented by French recruits, but the contribution of the French to the Normandy landing was small. Since France's humiliating defeat, General Charles De Gaulle had laboriously established himself as the leading figure of the anti-Vichy Free French, but both Roosevelt and Churchill distrusted him – and disliked him, Churchill with a special venom: He quipped in the midst of the war that "Of all the crosses I have to bear, the heaviest is the Cross of Lorraine" (a two-barred cross was the symbol of the Free French and De Gaulle). De Gaulle was not even informed of the date of the Normandy landing, nor of the date of the earlier landing in north Africa. But by the end of the war De Gaulle's forces had grown to 1.25 million, with ten divisions fighting in Germany, and he had generally become recognized as France's leader, but reestablishing France as a major power was a hard sell.

The Western Allies did not cross the Franco-German border until early 1945. As they worked their way into Germany, Soviet forces were pushing into the Danube valley. In January 1945, they renewed their offensive further north, into Polish territory. The Yalta meeting of the Big Three occurred in February 1945, by which date Marshal Zhukov's forces were already approaching Berlin and Germany's defeat was beyond question.

The Ambiguous Peace

Yalta became the most famous of the war-time conferences – or the most infamous, since many later charged that Roosevelt had "given away" eastern Europe at Yalta, not only because of his naïve beliefs about Stalin and frail health but also because his entourage had been infiltrated by spies for the Soviet Union. However, compared to Soviet Russia's impressive military victories by February, these factors seem relatively unimportant. Moreover, if Roosevelt had arrived at Tehran as a supplicant (hoping to placate Stalin and win his support for the United Nations), at Yalta Roosevelt had something more substantial in mind: Russia's entry into the war against Japan. (The Battle of Okinawa, the closest in the Pacific War to the Battle of Stalingrad in ferocity and civilian deaths, would last from April to mid-June 1945.)

One of Roosevelt's advisers later observed that the issue by the beginning of 1945 was not "what we would *let* the Russians do, but what we could *get* the Russians to do." Such actually had long been the case. Even if Roosevelt had been in better health, if he had been more willing to challenge Stalin, or if his entourage had not been infiltrated by spies, things most likely would have worked out much as they did, at least as far as the settlement in eastern Europe was concerned. However, a truculent Roosevelt might not have gotten Stalin's promise to declare war on Japan, nor his support for the United Nations.

After Roosevelt's death in April and the surrender of Germany in early May, the new American president did assume a distinctly more confrontational stance – and, revealingly, has been harshly criticized by some historians for unnecessarily

antagonizing Stalin, allegedly resulting in levels of hostility in the ensuing Cold War that might have been avoided. There were some obvious reasons for Truman's contrasting stance. He was a different personality with a different past and different options, and he had little of Roosevelt's confidence in his own personal charm and political adroitness: Truman was at first nearly overwhelmed by a sense of his own inadequacies, as the heavy burden of war-time leadership was so suddenly thrust upon him. Also clearly important in his contrasting attitude by the time of the Potsdam conference was the fact that the United States was days away from dropping atomic bombs on Japan. The importance of Russia's entering the war against Japan seemed less prominent, perhaps even no longer desirable.

By mid-July, when the Potsdam conference convened, there had been a shift as well in the earlier feelings of anti-Nazi cooperation. The numerous reports of brutal actions by the Soviets in the areas conquered by the Red Army in eastern Europe, mass rapes among them, provoked indignation in the United States, particularly among Americans of eastern-European origin, who constituted an important element of the vote for the Democratic Party. Truman's decision, then, to drop the atomic bombs served a range of purposes, though historians have debated how much each was decisive. Alongside the obvious one of forcing Japan to surrender there was that of impressing Stalin with the abruptly enhanced power of the United States.

Many things that had been left undecided at Tehran and Yalta were given a more permanent stamp at Potsdam, including the award of reparations, formally amounting to 10 billion dollars to the Soviet Union. In actual practice, none of the Allied conferences can be said to have achieved genuine consensus on a range of topics; the following year saw much wrangling over exact details and alleged broken promises. The Oder-Neisse line was not formally accepted as Germany's permanent eastern frontier by the Americans or British at Potsdam, but it did become permanent, since the subsequent peace conference to settle such matters was not held. But military occupation zones were agreed upon at Potsdam, as were plans for trials of the major Nazi leaders and other measures of denazification.

The Holocaust's Final Stages: Vengeance

As noted, the first extermination camps had been constructed by early 1942. The following two years were the most intense period of mass murder and genocide by the Nazis; deportations to eastern-European ghettos and death camps reached a peak by the summer of 1944. From May to July of that last full year of war, some 400,000 Hungarian Jews, most of whom had so far been sheltered by Hungarian authorities, were transported to their deaths at Auschwitz and elsewhere. In the final months of the war, thousands of others perished in various work details and elsewhere outside the camps; those included Gypsies, prisoners of war, and members of the anti-Nazi resistance.

The total number of Jews put to death, or who died as a direct result of Nazi oppression, has been the subject of sometimes passionate debate, but the estimate of 4 to 6 million is most widely accepted by scholars. Since Jews died from such diverse causes from 1939 to 1945, estimates of the number who died as a direct result of Nazi oppression must remain

encumbered by definitional issues, as must the number of other deaths, most notably of non-Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union, who died in even greater absolute numbers than Jews, though not as a greater percentage of their total populations.

In November 1944, with the approach of the Red Army, Nazi authorities closed and destroyed the camps at Auschwitz; the surviving inmates there and at other camps in Poland were moved, often in "death marches," to western camps. But thereafter, even in the western camps that had originally been designated as work camps, not specifically as death camps, many thousands died (especially those recently moved from the eastern camps) from overwork, neglect, malnutrition, and disease, before the Allied armies arrived. Many more died after liberation since they were in such a weakened state.

In most of the areas liberated from Nazi rule, on both the western and eastern fronts, spontaneous or vigilante-style retribution prevailed for some time, whether against captured Germans or local collaborators. In France, over 100,000 collaborators were brought before special courts, and some 1500 of them were condemned to death. In Czechoslovakia over 700 "traitors, collaborators, and Fascist elements" received the death penalty from special courts; equal numbers were sentenced to life in prison, and some 20,000 others to lesser prison sentences. In accord with agreements reached at Potsdam, the overwhelming majority of Germans living in the restored Czechoslovak state, whether or not they were active Nazis, were driven out, often accompanied by lawless violence against them. Even larger numbers were driven from those areas of former eastern Germany now allocated to Poland. In total, some 12 million ethnic Germans were obliged to move from eastern and central Europe, mostly to what would later constitute West Germany. It was one of the most extensive examples of ethnic cleansing in modern history.

The extent to which spontaneous actions and the special trials in various other liberated countries were entirely fair was not a major concern at the time. Passions raged, mob rule often prevailed, and, even where there were formal hearings, they hardly corresponded to rigorous standards of due process. Executions were often carried out only hours after a verdict was reached. Even in countries that had previously abolished it, the death penalty was temporarily restored so that the most detested collaborators could be speedily executed. Inside Germany, various local trials were held in the different occupied zones, as established at the Potsdam conference (American, British, French, and Soviet), but again they were not always concerned with legal niceties and rarely managed to maintain consistency of punishment.

The Nuremberg Trials

The Allies all wanted to publicize in some more effective way the crimes of the Nazi leaders. It was agreed, after lengthy negotiation, that a series of well-publicized trials would be held at Nuremberg and that they would respect, at least in broad outline, western-European and particularly American notions of due process. The Soviet leaders were actually among those most in favor of formal trials, but they had in mind something more like their own show trials of the late 1930s. The final compromise agreement involved the establishment of the International Military Tribunal of eight judges, two each from Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

The first and most famous of the trials was officially known as the Trial of the Major War Criminals, twenty-two in number. The prosecution had its work cut out for it, especially since understanding of the inner workings of the Nazi state was limited at this point. A great deal of information used by the prosecution was gained in pretrial interrogations of the accused, but the significance of that mass of information could not possibly have been adequately digested within the time allotted. Similarly, the decisions reached about the exact procedures and underlying legal principles of the trials were flawed by the compromises necessary, given the radically opposing worldviews and national interests of the judges. Myriad tortuous moral issues and legal technicalities emerged.

Justice at Nuremberg – or the lack of justice at Nuremberg – became a bitterly contentious issue. Some observers lamented the inadequacies of the punishments meted out, while others, among them distinguished legal experts, by no means pro-Nazi, were upset by the trials' violation of a number of widely recognized legal principles. A prominent example was the Nuremberg Tribunal's defining acts as criminal "after the fact" (*ex post facto*) – that is, when no law had existed that defined such acts as criminal when they were committed. Another example was using a double standard in punishing Germans for crimes that the Allies had themselves committed (e.g., bombing civilian centers, torturing spies, executing prisoners of war or using them as slave labor). One of the announced working principles of the trials was that *only* Nazi crimes were to be judged, and, similarly, that Nazi defendants could not claim in their defense that they had merely done what the Allies had also done.

The charge of applying a double standard was particularly pertinent in the case of the Soviet Union, since as an ally of Nazi Germany in 1939 it had participated in the very "crime against peace" that was most explicitly denounced by the Nuremberg prosecutors (that is, the attack on Poland, setting off World War II). Similarly, appointing Soviet judges seemed a travesty, given the utter lack of judicial independence in the Soviet Union. In the opinion of many, the "crimes against humanity" committed by the Nazis had been equaled if not exceeded by the Soviets and over a much longer period.

Nonetheless, a shaky consensus seemed to emerge that, even if the trials at Nuremberg failed to live up to high ideals of jurisprudence, they were preferable to lining leading Nazis up against a wall and shooting them. If the trials had been more rigorous in observing due process, especially in assuring the accused the rights that ordinary criminals in the American system enjoyed, it is likely that many more Nazi leaders would have been freed, including some of the worst.

Other dilemmas, linked to even more fundamental issues, arose. European states had long considered themselves sovereign, which involved the exercise of what has been termed "a monopoly of violence." (A sovereign state exercises the right, for example, to imprison its citizens, to sentence them to death, and to declare war.) In a sense, the leaders of modern sovereign nations, like the kings of old, "could do no wrong," in that they were considered above individual considerations of morality when defending the interests of the state. It will be recalled how Alexander I's Holy Alliance was mocked by most statesmen at the Congress of Vienna: The very idea of applying Christian standards to the actions of states in regard to one another was considered laughable. There had been many refinements, especially in Western democracies, in the way that the monopoly of violence was exercised, but nonetheless Europe's states did not readily recognize

externally imposed limits to their sovereignty, especially when national defense, or the survival of the nation, was in question.

A related and often unappreciated point was that the chief prosecutor of the first trial, Robert H. Jackson, did not consider the murder of the Jews to be the most fundamental crime of the Nazi regime, nor did he think that antisemitism was its main driving force. Instead, he believed that its most fundamental crime was the waging of aggressive war (a “crime against peace”). National aggrandizement through warfare by states recognizing no limit to their sovereignty was the most serious crime of modern times, he believed; other crimes, such as the murder of minorities, emerged from it. The Jews were killed, by this reasoning, largely because they got in the way of efficiently waging a war of expansion, especially as it evolved into what Nazi leaders saw as a war of survival.

Jackson’s reasoning was linked to his firm belief that future world peace could only be assured if waging aggressive war was recognized as criminal. That reasoning involved the corollary that military conquests should no longer confer rights on a victorious state – and there was the nettle, since many if not most of Europe’s states had at one time or another waged aggressive war for national aggrandizement (as had Jackson’s own country). The British and French empires were in part based on the rights of conquest, and in maintaining those empires both “crimes against peace” and “crimes against humanity” by European imperialists had been common. Even more relevant to the situation in 1945, many of the planned territorial changes at the end of the war were based on the right of conquest of the Big Three. Decisions about borders and population transfers, for example, were made by them in the war-time conferences, and these were decisions that often paid little or no heed to what the affected populations might have wanted.

Jackson’s reasoning encountered resistance in many quarters. It also raised some monumental definitional questions about what constituted acceptable military action. Germany’s rationale for war in August 1914 had been its right as a sovereign nation to defend itself; the reasoning of Germany’s leaders had been that a preemptive attack was necessary to defend their nation, before their encircling enemies, especially Russia, could complete their military mobilization. The Soviets, too, justified their alliance with Nazi Germany as necessary to national defense in a hostile capitalist world.

As earlier noted, a number of respected scholars have questioned whether hatred of Jews was the main reason that Germans joined the Nazi Party or voted for Hitler. Other scholars have questioned whether fear of Communism, as distinguished from a more deeply seated urge for national expansion, was the main force driving Germany in the 1930s. Hitler, in this view, had much in common with previous German statesmen, businessmen, and military leaders in his desire to expand to the east. From this perspective, both world wars are to be explained by Germany’s inexorable rise and the unwillingness of Europe’s other major powers to accept it or be able to adjust to it peacefully – a central theme of this volume.

These eminently debatable issues, however, remained in the background and were not what seemed to draw the attention of most observers to the first Nuremberg trial. Rather, it was the fact that, after years of war and the sensational publicity regarding the concentration camps in the spring and summer of 1945, the leaders of Nazi Germany were being brought to justice and full scrutiny. What would these men say,

stripped of their powers and regalia, in regard to the charges against them? One after the other they rose to declare themselves “not guilty.” A remarkable number even claimed that they knew nothing about the atrocities committed in the camps. Even more unbelievably, some – including Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop – denied knowledge of what Hitler was planning, in regard to both war with other nations and the genocide against the Jews.

Historians debate to this day precisely what the Germans, leaders or masses, knew about what was going on in the camps. They disagree also about how centrally directed or well organized the Holocaust was, but at the time of the Nuremberg trials little credence was given the claims of the defendants that they knew little about what Hitler and his closest advisers were thinking or doing. In some cases abundant evidence was presented that exposed them as liars. Nonetheless, what has impressed subsequent observers is how little these men fitted into existing stereotypes of Nazi leaders. In the case of Julius Streicher, notorious for his crude, semipornographic antisemitism – a man who *did* fit into the most negative of the existing stereotypes of Nazis – there was an unsettling revelation: His claim that he had nothing to do with the death camps was accurate, since Hitler, upset over repeated complaints about Streicher’s incompetence, had removed him from positions of responsibility. Streicher was not the kind of man to be trusted with implementing Hitler’s “antisemitism of reason.” In the IQ tests administered by Allied psychiatrists to the Nuremberg defendants, Streicher came out with the lowest score.

Hermann Goering, the head of the Luftwaffe and for some time recognized as second in command to Hitler, was also an unsettling defendant, if for opposite reasons. He had earlier been much ridiculed as a bumptious glutton, living in luxury and putting on many pounds. On the stand, however, he proved more than an intellectual match for Jackson. One of the American judges, in a letter to his wife, noted that “Bob Jackson fell down terribly in his cross-examination of Goering.” Goering had scored 138 on the IQ test (genius level), and he seemed neither intimidated nor guilt-ridden in his testimony. He claimed, moreover, to have had a number of Jewish friends, some of whom he helped. (A not uncommon claim among leading Nazis was that they had aided individual Jews at various times.)

But the evidence against Goering, in particular his role in the Final Solution, was overwhelming, and there was no way that the Third Reich’s number-two man would be acquitted or given a light sentence. He was sentenced to death by hanging. (However, a glass capsule of cyanide was somehow delivered to him, and he committed suicide in his cell.) Streicher, too, was condemned to death, even if little proof was offered about criminal actions on his part. He was deemed criminally responsible for his antisemitic ideas and publications. But punishing someone for ideas, not actions, was fundamentally contrary to American notions of freedom of speech – especially if the punishment was death.

Most of those charged with being major Nazi war criminals at the first trial did not come across as fanatics. Nor did most resemble familiar images of hardened criminals. Least of all could they plausibly be described as agents of capitalism in crisis or resentful “little men,” members of a bigoted petty bourgeoisie (along the lines of the Soviet interpretation of Fascism). Many of them had had promising careers before the Nazi period, and most were better educated and more intelligent than anyone at the time was

comfortable recognizing. It is ultimately difficult to discern a distinct Nazi type among the accused at the first Nuremberg trial. Twelve were sentenced to death and seven to prison terms. Three were acquitted, which served to enhance the impression that the accused had been given something resembling a fair chance to defend themselves.

In the less famous trials of major war criminals that followed, another twenty-four prominent Nazis would receive the death sentence, and over a hundred would be sentenced to prison, twenty of them for life. (There were, as well, many other trials of “minor” figures as part of the denazification process discussed in Chapter 22.) The number of these death sentences was less than half the number Churchill had proposed be executed summarily, and there arose a pervasive sense that many prominent Nazis received scandalously light sentences or escaped punishment entirely. Yet, among the general German population the Nuremberg verdicts were widely dismissed as “victors’ justice,” an opinion shared by a fair number of non-Germans, including legal experts in many liberal-democratic countries.

Dilemmas and Paradoxes of Punishment

A deeper truth was simply that there was no way to arrive at judgments adequate to deal with the unspeakable tragedies and injustices of these years. Aside from the difficulty of defining the nature of Nazi guilt, a similar dilemma existed in regard to how the Nazi past could ever be “mastered” by future generations of Germans. How could the German people ever regain “normality” and acceptance by other peoples? The notion of “mastering the past” was before long given a certain Germanic twist (and an impressive name, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), with vague parallels to the Freudian notion that a troubled individual’s rational understanding of his or her past is the key to regaining individual psychic health, or at least relative psychic calm – though it was usually a nearly unbearably painful process. “Coming to grips,” another familiar metaphor, with an unpleasant national past was of course a familiar enough concept, but in the case of the Nazi past it seemed that a quantum leap would be necessary, related to the assertion that the Holocaust was unprecedented and incomparable.

The kind of guilt associated with a crime defined in such a metaphysical way went far beyond the guilt, say, for starting World War I; it had something more in common, paradoxically, with the concept of the Crucifixion – that is, standing mystically outside history, and thus similar to the charge of deicide (that the Jews killed Christ); now it was that the Germans had tried to kill the Chosen People. A further mystical approach entered the picture with the claim that Hitler had exercised some sort of demonic power, causing otherwise decent people to lose their moral bearings and follow his orders, even for acts they somehow knew to be immoral. The excuse that Hitler’s will had become the law in the Third Reich was not without plausibility, and some Nazi leaders claimed that they were only attempting to conform to that will, explicitly or implicitly (known as “working toward the Führer” – that is, doing what the Führer wanted, even if he had not given explicit orders).

It was of course convenient that Hitler was now dead, as were many of those closest to him who were directly involved in the Holocaust. Hitler had committed suicide at the end of April, ten days after his fifty-sixth birthday, in his Berlin bunker, along with his

long-term mistress, Eva Braun. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels had also ended his own life in the bunker. His wife drugged their six children, crushed glass capsules of cyanide in their mouths, and then herself committed suicide. Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, also used a hidden glass capsule of cyanide to commit suicide not long after he was captured.

The logic of the position that Hitler's will was the law pointed toward the conclusion that no one was responsible or guilty but the now-dead Hitler. The whole nation had been under some sort of spell. Or, using a different metaphor, Nazi leaders had been mere cogs, without independent wills, in a giant totalitarian machine that had crushed all notions of personal responsibility and operated according to its own inhuman logic. Baldur von Schirach, leader of the Hitler Youth, did not deny his own antisemitic beliefs, nor did he deny his activities in expelling Jews from Germany, but he successfully claimed to have protested the overly harsh treatment of Jews. He was sentenced to twenty years in prison. Similarly, the obvious moral defects of other leaders – credulity, greed, duplicity, ambition, miscalculation, lack of civil courage – were common in other societies, and remain so. How then should we link them up to the crimes of World War II and the sense of the “unique” quality of Nazi crimes?

This was a question that would haunt subsequent generations and was much related to the long-debated issue of the nature and goals of modern antisemitism (itself of course part of the Jewish Question). The mass murder of Jews, on the one hand, seems obviously a product of antisemitism; but, on the other hand, what came to be called the Holocaust was more than a product of antisemitism. It was not initiated by the most antisemitic countries – that is, those bordering the Soviet Union – but rather by Germany, a country that, at least before 1914, was widely considered among Europe's least antisemitic. The move to mass murder was not in response to popular pressure from the German people – in fact, Nazi leaders strived to keep it secret from the general German population, and before the war Hitler, in striving to enhance his popularity, tried to give the impression that he was a relative moderate on the Jewish Question. Germany's advanced state of industrialization and the related efficiency and discipline of its people, especially their respect for state authority, may also be considered an obvious factor in making the Holocaust possible, but modernism as such seems an overly general culprit (it is notable that Britain, also an advanced industrial country, was among the least antisemitic of Europe's nations).

Many other factors might be mentioned in trying to explain how the Holocaust occurred, but relying on any single one (particularly antisemitism) as an independent force is clearly inadequate. Fascism, while another, related ideological force that seemed to point toward racial hatred, began (under Mussolini) as explicitly opposed to antisemitism and racism, and in fact attracted a number of Jewish admirers, inside Italy and on the right of the Zionist movement (to say nothing of its most famous admirer until the mid-1930s, Winston Churchill). Beyond the issue of Hitler's personal role, “history” made the Holocaust possible, especially insofar as the mass murder of Jews occurred during a war in which tens of millions of non-Jews perished. Moreover, the mass murder of Jews came at the end of a period (1914–39) in which mass death and appalling crimes against humanity, on the battlefield and inside the Soviet Union, occurred on an unprecedented scale and intensity.

Further Reading

Many of the previously listed studies of Nazism and the Holocaust also deal with the end of the war and the immediate postwar period.

Ann and John Tusa's *The Nuremberg Trials* (2010) is a lively and comprehensive (520pp.) account.

Herbert Feis's *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (1957) is an older, influential study, rich in detail.

David Cesarani's *Becoming Eichmann: Rethinking the Life, Crimes, and Trial of a "Desk Murderer"* (2004) deals with many of the central issues of German guilt, personal and collective. Deborah Lipstadt's *The Eichmann Trial* (2012) is shorter and more readable.

22 Europe's Nadir, the German Question, and the Origins of the Cold War

1945–50

At war's end, vast stretches of Europe had been reduced to bombed-out landscapes and smoking ruins. Civilian deaths and urban destruction far exceeded those of World War I, and millions of homeless refugees, or “displaced persons,” crowded into various camps or wandered from area to area, begging for food and shelter, while gangs of lawless, brutalized youth roamed the streets. In the areas overrun by the Red Army, an estimated 2 million women were raped, often repeatedly and in front of their husbands or families, with little or no effort by the Army's officers to exercise control.

As described in Chapter 21, the war-time meetings of the Big Three tended to paper over fundamental differences or postpone addressing them, but with the defeat of Nazi Germany those differences reasserted themselves inexorably. In a sense, the issue resembled that faced earlier with Hitler: Should Stalin and Communism be confronted with power or offered a willingness to compromise? That question became more complex after Stalin's death in early 1953, but the “lessons learned” in the 1930s colored international relations for the next half-century.

War-time Deaths, Military and Civilian

Military deaths in World War II were proportionately a bit less than in World War I, in part because the prolonged stalemate slaughter of the trenches between 1914 and 1918 was replaced by motorized and armored units and more rapidly moving battlefronts between 1939 and 1945. However, in both wars the totals were staggering. Comparisons can be misleading since deaths varied enormously from country to country. Estimates of war dead, like those of the Holocaust, are burdened with complex

definitional issues, but there is little doubt that the figures for the victorious Soviet Union were far larger than for defeated Germany, even if also the most disputed. After Soviet archives were opened to Western scholars in the 1990s, the widely accepted estimate has been that around 26 million Soviet citizens perished during World War II, well over half of them civilians. The total figure for war-time deaths in Europe was around 45 million (65–80 million worldwide), which means that the Soviet Union alone suffered significantly more deaths than all the other countries in Europe combined – an all the more stunning figure when the many millions of Soviet citizens who died or suffered horrendously in the decade before the war are added to it.

Estimating German losses is difficult because the German Reich's borders changed so much, but scholarly estimates are that something like 8 million Germans perished, several million of them civilians. The Poles also ranked high among those with the greatest war-time losses. Conversely, the number of dead, military and civilian, for Italy was relatively small, around 1 percent of its total population, compared to 16 percent for Poland, 14 percent for the Soviet Union, and 9 percent for Germany. France suffered far fewer military deaths in World War II (around 200,000) than in World War I (1.4 million), mostly because it dropped out of the war for about four years, but French civilians suffered both at the hands of their Nazi occupiers and because of Anglo-American bombing, which together resulted in a larger figure of French civilian deaths than military. Between June 1940 and September 1941, the British also suffered more civilian than military deaths, in this case because the Battle of Britain was largely an air war with bombing of civilian centers, but the final proportion of Britain's war-time dead to its total population was similarly close to 1 percent. Since no battles were waged on the American mainland, civilian deaths for the United States were nominal; military deaths, counting both the European and Pacific fronts, were around 420,000. That came down to 0.32 percent of the total population, the lowest rate of all the major combatants. The Soviet rate was roughly forty-five times greater.

The Unresolved German Question: Germany's Borders

The millions of dead and crippled and the extensive material destruction of the war meant that postwar production plummeted, in many areas to bare subsistence levels. Much of Europe's population lived in hunger or near starvation until 1948, and thousands died of exposure to the elements during the winter months. Political chaos also threatened, especially in the major areas of combat. Germany and Austria remained under Allied military occupation longer than other countries, to some degree reducing the potential for chaos, but the destruction of Germany's urban areas by May 1945 seemed overwhelming, due to incessant Allied strategic bombing, while the influx of some 12 million desperate ethnic German refugees added to the general sense of things spinning out of control. Some concluded that European civilization, especially its German element, had reached its nadir. Germans spoke of *Stunde Null*, zero hour, as if everything German had been wiped out. That turned out to be an overreaction, but it reflected the bleakness of the mood at the end of the war.

The nature of the European states that would be reestablished in the two to three years after the war remained uncertain, but in general the effort in 1919 to draw

national borders to fit existing populations according to language and ethnicity was replaced by forced transfers of population. This could be termed another kind of “final solution” to the problem of non-Jewish minorities in Europe’s nation-states, one that was started by the Nazis and then largely sanctioned by the Allies at the end of the war. It ultimately left most of Europe’s states more ethnically homogeneous than before 1939. These years also saw an often harsh application of Stalin’s dictum that each nation should impose its system “as far as its army could reach,” meaning that nearly all of eastern Europe came under Communist rule by 1948.

Tensions between the Western Allies and the Soviets multiplied after war’s end, but both sides remained in agreement about one thing: Germany must be prevented from reemerging as it did after 1919. Various proposals were put forth, similar to those under consideration in 1919, to divide the Reich into a southern, predominantly Catholic state, and a northern, predominantly Protestant one. Since much of Prussia’s eighteenth-century territory had been ceded to Poland at the end of World War I, a major reduction of the Bismarckian Reich had already occurred before Hitler assumed power and began a massive expansion of his nation. There was a question then of which borders Germany might return to, even if it were allowed to reunify.

The expansion of the Nazi Reich in 1938 to include Austria and Czechoslovakia obviously had no legitimacy in the eyes of the Allies, and those two countries were reestablished after the war, although Czechoslovakia gave up its eastern tip, with its large Ukrainian population, to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic of the Soviet Union. Austria was not only reestablished but was treated as if it bore no responsibility for the crimes of Nazism. Indeed, it gained the status of the “first victim” of Nazi Germany’s territorial expansion, a highly problematic designation, given the Austrians’ enthusiastic embrace of unity with Nazi Germany in 1938.

One of the most drastic plans for solving the German Question, once and for all, was that put forth by Henry Morgenthau, Roosevelt’s Secretary of the Treasury. He was also among those who had urged that Nazi leaders be summarily put to death, not tried in courts of law. He wanted Germany broken up into many smaller units and those units converted into premodern agricultural states incapable of waging modern warfare. He initially got a sympathetic hearing from Roosevelt and Churchill, but, once the practical implications of his plan had been duly considered, it was abandoned, mostly because preindustrial states would not be able to feed and provision Germany’s large population. Morgenthau’s further proposal that millions of Germans be shipped to some non-European area was rejected as even more ill conceived.

Denazification

Making decisions about Germany’s political future merged with the baffling issue of the appropriate treatment of its ordinary citizens. The major war criminals were to be dealt with by the Nuremberg tribunals, but designing punishment for the many millions of Germans who had been active party members seemed uncomfortably close to collective punishment. It had proved difficult enough to gather information about the major war criminals adequate to convict them in courts of law; doing something comparable for the millions of Germans who had been in responsible but relatively minor positions in

the Third Reich was patently impossible, and the prospect of imprisoning millions both impractical and distasteful. The issue of appropriate treatment was further muddled by chief prosecutor Jackson's opening remarks at the first Nuremberg trial, in which he made a distinction between the guilty German leaders and the German people, whom he described as victims of Nazi tyranny, a designation even more problematic than that of Austria as Nazi Germany's first victim.

No doubt many non-Jewish Germans, Austrians included, had been victims of Nazism, especially those on the liberal, socialist, and Communist left. Some 3 to 4 million non-Jewish Germans had suffered Nazi persecution, by being put under police surveillance, losing their jobs, and facing imprisonment or terms in concentration camps, where many perished or emerged broken in body and spirit. The thoroughness of Nazi repression meant that finding qualified Germans who might take up postwar positions of authority but who were untainted by Nazi associations was often frustrating. In other countries, the leading cadres of the new governments were usually drawn from the war-time anti-Nazi or anti-Fascist resistance movements, but by 1945 organized opposition inside Germany had been reduced to insignificance.

One result of the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944, led by Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, was that prominent military figures and members of other non-Nazi traditional elites were arrested and executed by the thousands. Himmler's Gestapo exploited the occasion to arrest and at times execute those simply suspected of anti-Nazi sympathies, even if no proof was found that they were part of the plot to assassinate Hitler. The earlier non-violent efforts of the White Rose Movement, largely composed of intellectuals and university students, to denounce Nazism via a pamphlet campaign from June 1942 to February 1943 did not find a significant popular response. The main leaders of the White Rose were easily identified and, after lengthy interrogation, guillotined.

With the implicit assumption that a large part of the German population had been thoroughly nazified, programs of denazification were initiated in each zone, but most ambitiously by the Americans. However, denazification came to be considered a failure, on the one hand mocked as naive and on the other resented as unjust by the German population. It moreover became bogged down in unmanageable paperwork, as millions of Germans were instructed to fill out elaborate questionnaires about their pasts. Some of the more practical measures of denazification, such as outlawing the Nazi Party, removing former Nazi Party members from positions of authority, renaming streets, and destroying statues of Hitler, were accepted as appropriate. But the notion that the German population, after twelve years of totalitarian indoctrination, to say nothing of a long history of authoritarian rule, could be reeducated in a few years to embrace different values proved unrealistic. Postwar polls repeatedly showed how various attitudes and beliefs favorable to Nazism were retained by significant segments of the general German population. As late as 1962, over half of those polled in West Germany believed that the July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Hitler was the work of "traitors." It was only decades later that von Stauffenberg and the leaders of the White Rose became widely embraced positive symbols for a new Germany.

The subsequent trials of those Nazi leaders not tried at Nuremberg were put in the hands of German authorities, not always to general satisfaction. However, even with the best of wills, the task itself was bound to offend one or another constituency. It was

found easier to bring the less serious cases to trial first, which meant that relatively minor offenders were quickly and at times harshly punished, whereas many of the more serious and more complicated cases were repeatedly postponed. The pileup of cases became unmanageable and led to a series of general amnesties. While millions of Germans had been identified as probably culpable, only a few thousand actually spent time in custody, and by 1949 all but a few hundred of those thousands had been released. Ironically, the punishments for those who collaborated with Nazi rulers in France, Holland, and Norway often turned out to be harsher than the punishments meted out to the Nazi rulers themselves inside West Germany.

Denazification had no official termination point; it simply faded away, although various trials, mainly of the most notorious Nazis who had initially evaded capture, continued into the 1980s. It would take decades before it could be concluded that most Germans no longer regarded Nazism in positive ways. That shift was gradual and probably had less to do with the formal efforts to reeducate Germans than with the fact that older Nazis were dying off, replaced by a younger generation with different historical experiences and beliefs. A strong shift in the attitudes of Europe's younger generations, especially notable by the late 1960s, occurred in every country, but the distance between generations was particularly stark in Germany.

The plans of Soviet officials for dealing with those Nazis remaining in the Soviet zone (many fled westward) had parallels with the Morgenthau Plan, at least in terms of their initial severity and their determination to reorganize the German economy in fundamental ways. But, rather than deindustrialization, Soviet leaders sought to replace Nazi economic structures, considered to be creations of capitalism, with those modeled on Soviet Communism. Marxist doctrine, too, made a distinction between guilty leaders (agents of capitalism) and victims (the working masses). Nonetheless, German Communist leaders openly spoke of how the German proletariat had "failed in its historic role." Now the Communist Party would give the masses proper leadership. The task of reeducating those masses appeared easier when one totalitarian regime was replaced by another, but Communist leaders in the Soviet zone were also prone to amnesia and compromises, hoping to gain popularity.

By the end of 1948, memories of World War II were being pushed aside by the rising passions of the Cold War. The concern of leaders in the United States to have a German ally against the perceived threat of Soviet expansion tended to weaken the earlier determination to deal severely with the Nazis. Those who denounced the whole denazification experience as a whitewash undoubtedly had a point, as did those who criticized the Nuremberg trials as representing "victors' justice," but in both cases the critics did not offer unmistakably superior alternatives. Most of all, the rising passions of the Cold War tended to trump the lingering sense that the Nazis had gotten away with murder.

The Two Germanies, East and West

After the Potsdam conference, the administration of the four zones of military occupation, American, British, French, and Soviet, became mired in mutual recrimination over their respective roles and rights. The legitimacy of the claims of the occupying powers has been a source of lasting debate, one that has obvious connections with the



Maps 22.1–22.3 Germany's changing borders. *Top:* Interwar Germany, 1919–39. *Middle:* Greater Germany (Grossdeutsches Reich), 1941–5. *Bottom:* Truncated, divided Germany, 1949–90.

wider issue of responsibility for the Cold War. Soviet leaders asserted that, since they had suffered incomparably more from the war than the Western Allies had, their claims on Germany were justifiably greater. That assertion was hard to contest but also impossibly open-ended. In the immediate postwar years, the Soviet authorities oversaw a massive appropriation of German goods and the use of hundreds of thousands of forced laborers from Germany. In the first year after the war, an enormous amount of Germany's industrial infrastructure was removed by Soviet authorities, lock, stock, and barrel. Within five years, the Soviets had moved around 10 billion dollars' worth of agricultural and industrial goods from German lands to the Soviet Union. That constituted only a fraction of Nazi damage to the Soviet Union during the war, but it reduced the German population to even greater destitution in many areas.

By early 1948, the four zones of occupied Germany were being gradually reconstituted into western and eastern states, a process that was formally completed by the autumn of 1949. The American, British, and French zones became the Federal Republic (Bundesrepublik), informally known as West Germany or the Bonn Republic after its capital city on the Rhine. The Soviet zone became the smaller German Democratic Republic (or DDR, *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*), informally East Germany, with its capital in Berlin. The Basic Law of the Federal Republic established a decentralized liberal-democratic state, composed of ten federated substates (*Länder*). Some of them, most prominently Bavaria, were similar to those in the Weimar Republic, but the Federal Republic lacked the large, previously dominating Prussian element of both the Weimar Republic and Bismarckian Germany. The perceived weaknesses of the Weimar constitution were addressed, and an extensive bill of rights included.

East Germany became a "people's republic," a term eventually used for most of the eastern-European countries that fell under Soviet domination ("the Soviet Bloc"). These republics were guided by Communist principles, meaning that ownership of the means of production was taken over by the state, and the state itself was "guided" by the Communist Party. East Germany included areas in which, before the Nazi period, the KPD and SPD had been strong, and those two parties were soon formally combined into the Socialist Unity Party, or SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*), in an effort gain popular support. Few failed to understand, however, that the Moscow-supported leaders of the former KPD remained in control of the SED, most prominently Walter Ulbricht, a particularly wooden Stalinist who became the most familiar face of East German Communism.

In West Germany, the first general elections saw the emergence of two major parties. The Christian Democratic Union had roots in the pre-Nazi Catholic Center Party but now explicitly appealed to Protestants as well. The Social Democratic Party was a revival of the SPD of the pre-Nazi years. The Center Party and the SPD had been the two largest parties of the initially ruling Weimar Coalition, but the two had not constituted a reliable majority in the following years. By 1949, the situation had changed significantly, and both had grown enough in popular appeal that either the Christian Democrats or the Social Democrats alone could aspire to win an absolute majority, though a secure majority remained an ever-elusive goal for both. The right-wing parties of the Weimar years largely disappeared. Those Protestant conservatives in West Germany who had voted Nationalist or Nazi during the Weimar years now tended to vote for the Christian Democratic Party. The Communists in West Germany proved to have little popular

appeal, and before long the Communist Party was outlawed. The Free Democratic Party, a new, smaller party, made an appearance, with roots in the Democratic and People's parties of the Weimar years. In following decades the Free Democrats allied alternately with the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, providing each with more secure Bundestag majorities.

Schumacher and Adenauer

The leading personalities of the two major parties were rather different from those of their Weimar parent parties. Social Democrat Kurt Schumacher had survived twelve years in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. A man of astonishing personal courage and unshakable convictions, he emerged from the camps shattered in health but harboring a belief that he could lead Germany from ruin to the promised land of democratic socialism. As a decorated veteran of the front in World War I, during which he had lost his right arm, he had been treated with relative leniency by Nazi authorities, but his stubborn rebelliousness while imprisoned cost him dearly.

Konrad Adenauer was a scarcely less remarkable figure. He came to be known as *Der Alte* (the Old Man), since he was already in his seventies when he took over leadership of the Christian Democrats. He had served as mayor of Cologne during the Weimar period and was able to survive the Nazi years by walking a fine line, not compromising his devout Catholic beliefs – at least not blatantly – while also avoiding the kind of overt opposition to Nazi rule that would have resulted in his being sent to the camps, though he did spend two brief periods in prison.

Adenauer became the first chancellor of the new Federal Republic, winning a narrow majority in its Bundestag (the popularly elected lower house) and then serving for fourteen crucial years, from 1949 to 1963, and presiding over an economic transformation eventually termed “the German miracle.” His vision was of a Germany restored to international respect, with a Western-style open society and a free-market economy. Like Bismarck, Adenauer was a man of strong opinions and cunning political instincts, and, also like Bismarck, he harbored few illusions about his fellow man – and even fewer about his fellow Germans. He was capable of compromise when necessary (and he often found it necessary), but he remained a stern, no-nonsense leader.

Many observers concluded that only such an authoritarian but politically nimble figure had any chance of effectively ruling West Germany's traumatized and atomized society. His superficial resemblances to Bismarck, however, were countered by more profound differences. He was a Catholic not a Protestant, a Rhinelander not a Prussian, of upper-middle-class not Junker background. In 1949, West Germany was roughly fifty-fifty Catholic and Protestant, whereas there had been a large Protestant majority in the Bismarckian Reich. By 1949, historic Prussia had been destroyed, as had its Junker ruling class. Those western territories that had been gained by Prussia in 1815 were now reorganized into the above-mentioned substates or *Länder*.

Adenauer believed it politically unwise to “overdo” denazification. He was thus not particularly curious or judgmental about the Nazi pasts of many who came to hold important positions in the Federal Republic. But he also worked to establish good relations with the new state of Israel, as part of his effort to rehabilitate Germany's moral

standing in the world. As a devout Catholic, he was naturally anti-Communist, and he believed that an anti-Communist stance was crucial to maintaining a close alliance with the United States. While it might be too much to describe West Germans in the immediate postwar period as sincerely admiring the United States, most of them much preferred the indulgent and affluent Americans to the vengeful and impoverished "Russians."

The American leaders, in turn, much preferred Adenauer to Schumacher, whose stridently expressed socialist convictions soon drew him into clashes with American military authorities. He dreamed of a unified socialist Germany, neutral in the Cold War. He wanted to nationalize large industry because he believed Germany's capitalist elite had given decisive support to Hitler. In the 1949 national elections, the SPD actually won slightly more Bundestag seats than the Christian Democratic Union, but Adenauer gained the support of the Free Democrats and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (a sister party to the Christian Democratic Union).

Schumacher was outraged by Adenauer's victory, and he thereafter assumed an ill-tempered opposition to almost everything undertaken by the Christian Democrats. His courage was greatly admired within his party, but many of its leaders were unenthusiastic about his intransigent anticapitalism, hoping instead to continue the transformation of their party toward democratic reformism and the "vital" political center. Schumacher's frail health finally solved their dilemma. He suffered the amputation of one leg (in addition to the loss of his arm in World War I), was felled by a stroke in December 1951, and died in August 1952, at age fifty-six.

Social Democrats vs. Christian Democrats

By 1959, the SPD, faced with the dazzling economic success of Germany under Christian Democratic leadership, adopted a new program that made an even cleaner break with Marxist theories of class conflict and economic determinism than it had during the Weimar years. The program stressed Europe's humanist tradition, based on classical philosophy and Christian ethics. The SPD similarly pronounced itself more open to market incentives and private ownership of the means of production. The party's new electoral slogan was "as much competition as possible, as much planning as necessary." The Social Democrats won many provincial and urban victories, most notably in Berlin, but national office continued to elude them from 1949 to 1969.

The Christian Democrats, while emphasizing antisocialism, were not exactly hard-line defenders of capitalism either. Germany's economic recovery, however "free," remained linked to the Bismarckian tradition that favorably viewed state intervention to regulate capitalism's excesses and to aid the lower orders. The Christian Democrats spoke of a "social market economy" (*Soziale Marktwirtschaft*), which in fact roughly resembled trends in other advanced industrial economies. The notion of a fine-tuned capitalism, one capable of controlling the free market's tendencies to undermine social solidarity, would have both social-democratic and Christian-democratic versions. In fact, recognition of a major role of the state in regulating (or "planning") capitalism was accepted to one degree or another by all major political tendencies in Europe after World War II.

Postwar Austria

A specifically Austrian identity revived to a remarkable degree at the end of the war. Austria was also divided into four occupation zones, with Vienna, like Berlin, itself subdivided into four subzones, surrounded by the Soviet zone. The two main parties that emerged by the time of the first elections in Austria had roots in the Social Democratic and Christian Social parties of the first republic, but with new names, the Socialist Party and People's Party, the latter moving away from its earlier close identification with the Catholic Church, stressing instead conservative values of a wider, more secular nature.

Something like a two-party system emerged in Austria, but the two main parties were able to put aside the violent hostility that had characterized their parent parties during the 1930s. Rather than alternating in power, they governed in tandem, according to complex formulas, soon touted as "the Austrian Way." Suppressing memories of the recent past, or creating a mythical, more bearable past, was a tendency in most European countries, but that tendency took on particularly striking aspects, as part of Austria's pretense of being Nazism's first victim. The pretense was attractive – one does not blame a victim – and plausible, in that both parties had been anti-Nazi, and leaders of both had been persecuted once the Nazis took over Austria in 1938. That common experience of persecution, which meant, in some cases, being in the same prison cells or concentration camps, apparently contributed to the surprising tolerance that each party extended to the other after the war.

The new political arrangements functioned reasonably well. After some very hard times in the immediate postwar years, Austria experienced its own kind of economic miracle, based again not on classic capitalist principles but rather on what was termed a "social partnership" of capital and labor. Unlike Germany, Austria was able to regain its prewar unity within a decade of the end of the war. An aspect of that unity was that Austria remained, like neighboring Switzerland, a neutral country in the Cold War.

The Origins and Nature of the Cold War

The two separate German states would not have assumed the shapes they did without the rising tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, tensions that soon were being termed a "cold" war – and then *the* Cold War. In Europe it was not a "hot" or shooting war but rather consisted of threats, military build-ups, and some hair-raising confrontations. One of the initial arenas of Cold War confrontation was the two Germanies, with disputes especially focusing on the status of Berlin, but most of Europe also became involved. Moreover, the conflict in the form of "Communism vs. Democracy" came to influence much of the rest of the world, where full-out shooting wars did occur, notably in Korea (June 1950 to July 1953). The spread of Communism to China in 1949, initially seen as a great victory for Communism and thus the Soviet Union, further fueled the fires of anti-Communism in the United States and Europe.

Since there were no formal declarations of war, the exact point at which the Cold War began is difficult to state. As we have seen, already at the Potsdam conference, Truman had assumed a decidedly more confrontational stance than Roosevelt had, but hopes for

continued Allied cooperation remained alive on both sides for most of the rest of 1945. By early March 1946, however, the tone of the east–west relations was becoming more truculent. Churchill abandoned his earlier confidence that Stalin could be trusted, and in a famous speech at Fulton, Missouri, asserted that “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.”

What is often forgotten is that, at the time, Churchill’s “iron-curtain” speech was widely considered an embarrassment, an undiplomatic provocation. Such was especially the reaction of those who still harbored hopes for postwar cooperation. In Britain Churchill, now out of power, was denounced by moderates and leftists as an irresponsible war-monger, in terms that much resembled the criticism of him of the 1930s. (What would certainly have inflamed his detractors all the more, if they had known of it, was that, behind the scenes, he had begun urging that Soviet leaders be delivered an ultimatum: If they did not abandon their expansionist designs in regard to western Europe, an atomic bomb would be dropped on Moscow. He was confident that such an ultimatum would cause the Soviets to become more pliant.)

For many years, a common opinion was that the Cold War had emerged from the West’s resistance to Soviet aggression. Thus Churchill was believed to be prescient, in his iron-curtain speech, as he had been in warning against the appeasement of Nazi Germany. In those years and indeed into the twenty-first century, an abiding “lesson of history” was repeatedly stressed: Appeasing totalitarian dictators only whetted their appetites; they must be met with force. For many observers in the West, especially in the United States, the Soviet Union became the new Nazi Germany, and Stalin the new Hitler. However, a counternarrative grew in appeal as the century progressed, one that emphasized American capitalism as the real trouble-maker, whereas the Soviet Union was seen as gravely weakened by the war and acting defensively against the aggressive stance of the United States.

The shifts in scholarly opinion about the origins of the Cold War have some suggestive parallels to the shifting interpretations of the origins of World War I. That is, standing back from the initial, highly partisan accounts of each side, historians of the Cold War have tended to emphasize the clash of expansionist states, each with a universalist ideology that demonized its opposition while seeing itself as courageously defending high principles. From this perspective, the Cold War comes to appear all too predictable, rather than the result of bad leadership. In truth, if harmony between the Communist and capitalist worlds had prevailed after World War II, *that* would have been a historical puzzle of considerably greater dimensions for subsequent historians to analyze than the Cold War itself was.

In the earlier, more partisan accounts of the origins of the Cold War, as with the early accounts of World War I, the indictments by each side were characterized by moral outrage that tended to focus on the central role of evil personalities: for World War I, Wilhelm II; for the Cold War, Stalin. Undoubtedly, “personal diplomacy” played a key role at Tehran and Yalta, and, with Roosevelt’s death and Churchill’s fall from power, things changed at Potsdam in part because different personalities were involved. It is only natural to wonder whether history might have taken different directions if, in April 1945, Stalin had died and Roosevelt had lived. (The Soviet dictator was in fact four years older than the American president.) How much might a conciliatory and politically adroit Roosevelt, working cooperatively with a less paranoid Soviet leader, have avoided

the dangerous confrontations of the Cold War? Could the constant crises, the hugely wasteful military expenditures, the ever-looming nightmare of an atomic holocaust have been avoided or at least significantly mitigated?

Assumptions related to such speculations are in the background of what have come to be termed "revisionist" interpretations of the origins of the Cold War (that is, revising those interpretations that placed primary blame on the Soviet Union). However, even recognizing the role of personality, it seems that the most to be realistically expected was a somewhat less dangerous or intense confrontation, not genuine or lasting harmony. The very fact that in the immediate postwar years there were only two major powers itself had ominous implications, because of what might be termed the "bipolar syndrome" in international relations. "Bipolar" has recently become a popular term referring to psychic instability and dangerous mood swings. In diplomacy, "bipolarity," in the more literal sense of two poles of power, could also be termed inherently dangerous. The dangers of bipolarity after World War II were all the greater because of the increased role of ideology, of Communism vs. liberal democracy, each demonizing the other. In short, there was something profoundly "structural" at work in those years, something deeper than personality in the worsening relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Already in the nineteenth century, despotic Russia and democratic America had regarded each other as "polar" opposites. Alexis De Tocqueville, the famed French observer of early democracy in the United States, had predicted that the two countries would emerge in the future as major world powers and would inevitably come into conflict. Hostility between them was the prevalent tone before 1914, but with the Bolshevik Revolution that hostility became more profoundly ideological and urgently competitive: Wilson vs. Lenin! The United States sent troops into Russia against the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War. The decline in overt hostility during the years of the New Deal and Popular Front had more to do with the two countries' sense of a common enemy in Nazi Germany than with any genuine sharing of ideals. When the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed in August 1939, the relationship again relapsed into a familiar if also an even more intense hostility.

The issue of personality overlaps with the argument that moral ideals also matter in international relations. Some have argued that it is not justifiable to evaluate the United States and the Soviet Union as if they were morally equal states (or led by people of equal moral stature). Those most hostile to the Soviet Union in the immediate postwar period have pointed to Stalin's appalling personal record but also to that of the murderous Communist regime since 1917. Once the Third Reich had been destroyed, Stalin began imposing Communist tyranny in eastern Europe. How could the leaders of the United States, with their identity as upholders of justice and morality, continue to cultivate friendly relations with such a man or such a regime?

In the debates about the origins of the Cold War, the revisionists have emphasized that Stalin did make a number of conciliatory gestures in the immediate postwar period, whereas the Americans made a number of provocative ones. The revisionist argument has similarly stressed that Stalin understood how unwise it would be to provoke the Americans, who had emerged relatively unscathed by the war. But those stressing Soviet responsibility for the Cold War have maintained that Stalin's initially conciliatory actions did not add up to his sincerely working for (or believing in) peace and lasting international

harmony. Before long he was sure to return to the brutal methods he had perfected in the 1930s. For Stalin's detractors, then, the attempt to present him as a rational, reliable leader, simply pursuing the national interest of his country, has something in common with the description of Hitler as a traditional statesman – perhaps plausible in some regards but misleading overall. Those detractors grant that Stalin could appear reasonable, even charming, but his bloody past revealed his true moral essence.

The relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States remained in a state of limbo from mid-1945 through 1947; both sides mixed confrontational and conciliatory gestures, but by the beginning of 1948 the earlier hopes for harmonious relations had largely disappeared. For the rest of that year a shooting war was only narrowly averted in a clash over the status of Berlin. Similarly, the coalition governments of Communists and non-Communists that had been patched together at the end of the war fell apart in both eastern and western Europe. By March 1947, a year after Churchill's iron-curtain speech, the Truman Doctrine was proclaimed, which promised that the United States would come to the military aid of any country threatened by Communist expansion. (At this point the most immediately pressing issue was the civil war in Greece between royalist and Communist forces.) But probably more decisive in permanently separating the two sides was the Marshall Plan, formally announced in June 1947, which pledged billions of dollars to restore the economies of Europe. The Plan was apparently seen by Stalin as more deeply threatening than the Truman Doctrine because a number of eastern-European states, prominently Poland and Czechoslovakia, were tempted to apply for aid under its provisions.

There is little question that one of the Plan's several attractions for members of the United States congress, fearing a return of the depression of the 1930s, was that it promised to open Europe's economy to American trade and investment. Stalin perceived the Plan as American capitalist expansion into areas that he believed must remain "friendly" to the Soviet Union. Most Americans saw the Plan in a more altruistic light, but at the same time they believed that Communism's appeal was to impoverished populations. Thus, restoring Europe's economy was believed crucial to combating Communism.

If a single catalyst of the Cold War is to be identified, after which there was no turning back, a good case can be made for events in Czechoslovakia in February of 1948, often referred to as the "Prague Coup." Elections in the country in 1946, recognized as among the freest in Europe, had given no single party a clear majority, but the Czechoslovak Communist Party won 38 percent, making it the single strongest party. President Edvard Beneš, a Czech socialist who was on friendly terms with Stalin and who had also been president at the time of the Munich Agreements, appointed the Communist Party leader, Klement Gottwald, as premier in May 1946, to head a multiparty cabinet but with the Communists taking many of the key ministries.

At that point the Czechoslovak model seemed poised to demonstrate how Communist rule could be introduced non-violently, through the ballot box, with far-flung implications for other countries. In fact, the Czech population, compared to most other eastern-European populations, at this point was inclined to be friendly to the Soviet Union. The Red Army had liberated the Czechs from Nazi tyranny, and the country, after the Munich Agreements, looked eastward rather than westward for protection from future German revanchist designs.

However, by the summer of 1947, the Communist-led cabinet had alienated large parts of the population, and many anticipated that in the scheduled May 1948 elections support for the Czech Communist Party would decline. Already in other areas of eastern Europe in the course of 1947, Soviet authorities had been "enhancing" the role of Communists in various coalition governments, often brutally. It is doubtful that Stalin had ever seriously entertained the possibility that Communism might prevail in Czechoslovakia peacefully, with a majority of the population supporting it in free elections, and by the autumn of 1947 he was turning to more tried and true methods. In February 1948, the Czech Communists staged a coup, largely bloodless, that effectively removed other parties from positions of power.

By early 1948, Stalin had begun to reveal ominous suspicions of "nationalist deviations" by Communist Party leaders elsewhere. The most prominent example was in Yugoslavia, where Josip Broz, better known by his revolutionary name, Tito, enjoyed strong popular support. Rather than a cause for satisfaction, however, Tito's popularity aroused suspicions on Stalin's part, and "Titoism" came to be considered a particularly dangerous heresy (further described in Chapter 23).

The Prague Coup did not involve direct confrontations between the military forces of the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, but such confrontations did develop in the months immediate following it, in the form of the Soviets blocking road and rail access to Berlin from the west. (It will be recalled that the former German capital city had been divided into four parts at Potsdam, all situated inside the Soviet sector.) The division of Berlin had been an awkward arrangement, seeming to promise future difficulties, and that division is understandable only in the relatively harmonious climate of the end of the war, when various tentative administrative agreements were being made in anticipation of a general peace conference. In the confrontation over access to the city, Stalin held the strong cards, but he encountered unexpectedly stubborn resistance to the blockade by the Americans and British. As other countries watched in fascination or horror, Europe seemed once again on the verge of a general war.

The Berlin crisis turned into an initial example of what would later be termed Cold War "brinkmanship." Generals on both sides were urging a major show of armed force, but the response finally decided upon by the Anglo-Americans was to provision the western sectors of Berlin by air. That seemed impractical, if not sheer folly, to many at the time, but it finally succeeded and later became one of the most famous and defining episodes of the Cold War, known as the Berlin Airlift.

Truman seemed ready for a genuine shooting war if American planes were shot down, but he vetoed preparations by his military leaders to move atomic bombs to Germany. In this drawn-out war of nerves lasting over a year, Soviet pilots repeatedly harassed Anglo-American transport aircraft and even fired warning shots, but no serious air battles developed. It finally proved possible to move enough provisions by air to maintain the 2.5 million West Berliners who were cut off from normal transports. Stalin called off the blockade in May 1949, but the Cold War was by then unequivocally launched. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed during the last months of the Berlin Airlift; its initial twelve members, led by the United States, Britain, and France, pledged to defend any one of its members against military aggression by the Soviet Union or by any of its eastern-European satellite states. When the Soviet Union detonated its own atomic bomb in August 1949 – much earlier than the Western

observers had expected – hostility between the two blocs rose alarmingly, all the more so when Communist North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950. A third world war, this time one of atomic weapons, loomed. The horror of that prospect may have been crucial to averting war in the next half-century; many crises were yet to come.

Further Reading

Studies of the Cold War tend to focus on US–Soviet relations, but the Cold War's center, especially at first, was in Europe, even if the actual fighting broke out in non-European areas.

Melvyn P. Leffler's *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (2007) is one of many outstanding recent histories of the Cold War.

Another excellent work is William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945–2002* (2004), which has material relevant to all of the chapters of Part V. Tony Judt's *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (2006) covers the postwar European scene to 2005 at much greater length and breadth.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa's *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (2006) provides a richly textured and revealing international perspective on the end of the war and the beginning of Soviet–American competition, from a scholar familiar with Japanese, Russian, and American archives.

23 The Mystique of Revolution

Ideologies and Realities, 1945 to the 1960s

Time after time in the course of the twentieth century, the revolutionary mystique was declared moribund, a romantic fantasy, dangerous in the ways that it encouraged left-wing fanaticism and provoked right-wing reaction. But that mystique survived through many ups and downs, if tattered and torn. The Bolshevik Revolution contributed to its remarkable durability, even if the dictatorial and terrorist aspects of Bolshevik rule also repelled many on the socialist left. The horrors of Stalinism in the 1930s alienated yet larger numbers, though many tended to keep such feelings under control because of what they considered the greater threat from Nazi Germany. And then the Nazi–Soviet Pact dealt the Mystique what seemed a death blow. Nonetheless, after the Battle of Stalingrad, the vision of the Soviet Union as the enduring heart and soul of that mystical, sprawling concept, “the revolution,” was revived, and Stalin’s reputation as its leader rose again to superhuman dimensions in the minds of many. After his death, the revolutionary mystique tended to survive most strongly in non-European areas; in Europe the Soviet model generally declined in attractiveness and non-Soviet revolutionary models proved to have little lasting power. In western Europe revolutionary socialists never came close to power, and democratic socialists experienced success only in a qualified sense and in limited areas.

The Revolutionary Mystique in the Immediate Postwar Years

As noted, even some of those who retained memories of the monstrously dark side of Stalin’s rule somehow rationalized or repressed it. That became ever more difficult as Stalin’s paranoia began to revive in the late 1940s. His death in early March 1953 and

the ensuing efforts to undo some of the worst excesses of his rule made it easier for many outside the Soviet Union to retain their faith in the Homeland of the Revolution for a while longer, though that faith yet again faced major challenges in 1956 and 1968. In the crises of those years, there were many on the left who denounced Soviet Communism as “reactionary,” a betrayal of socialist ideals. (And from Communist China came even more vehement denunciations, though for opposite reasons: Soviet leaders had become “revisionists” of Marxism.)

The Soviet mystique at the end of World War II spread more widely than it had after 1917 but in many regards was even more problematic. Communist ascent was assured in eastern Europe by the presence of the Red Army and the Soviet secret police, not by spontaneous popular action, though in a few countries, as we have seen, Communist parties did enjoy considerable popular support for a while, and Stalin hinted that the exact Soviet model need not be followed by all countries. Such hints turned out to be deceptive, but undoubtedly many did entertain the notion of different (and implicitly better) paths to Communism. That had been an issue when Communist parties were first founded in 1919–21, and it reemerged repeatedly throughout the twentieth century, in Europe and in the rest of the world. After Stalin’s death and the victory of the Communists in China, the Soviet path to Communism, with the leading role of the Soviet Communist Party, was obviously no longer the only one. In fact, the various ways that Communists came to power from 1945 to 1948 in the Soviet Bloc countries differed markedly from the way the Bolsheviks had come to power in 1917, to say nothing of how power was retained thereafter.

Many of those in western Europe who had abandoned the belief in a violent seizure of power by a revolutionary elite with the goal of introducing socialism nonetheless retained socialist hopes of various sorts, mostly because they believed the free market and competitive individualism were unacceptably merciless and destructive to social solidarity. They similarly concluded that capitalism had amply demonstrated itself to be flawed even as an effective economic system, repeatedly producing economic depressions. Leftists of this sort tended to describe themselves as democratic socialists, but, since both capitalist America and Communist Russia claimed to be “democratic,” the term was not without its problems. Democratic socialists considered Leninist elitism to be decidedly *not* democratic. They stressed that genuine majority support, expressed in free elections, was necessary before socialist measures could be introduced.

Democratic socialists tended to overlap with those for whom individual freedom was a more prominent concern than egalitarian harmony (and who thus preferred to be termed liberals, radicals, or Christian democrats). As noted in the case of the SPD, most European socialists came to accept that a largely free market was more productive than one largely controlled by the state. Moreover, many concluded that high levels of production were the most reliable guarantees of social harmony. They similarly worried that individual freedoms in other arenas than the economic would be threatened if the state were to grow too powerful.

Democratic socialists after World War II tended to be increasingly pragmatic rather than ideological in the measures they proposed, working cautiously toward a goal that they freely admitted was open-ended. In practical terms, they tended to be edging away from aspects of capitalism whose evils were all too real for them, rather than toward a precisely defined socialist goal. Communists derided the democratic socialists as weak compromisers who offered an endlessly postponed, ultimately bogus socialism. As the

century progressed, it became common even for non-Communists to refer to the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc countries as the only ones in which “real, existing socialism” was in place. The term apparently first appeared in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s to emphasize that, contrary to the grandiose promises and projects of Nikita Khrushchev (discussed below), the socialism that already existed in the country was “real” enough – as good as it gets.

Democratic Socialism in Western Europe: Great Britain

Previous chapters have given special attention to Britain as a model of gradual evolution toward liberal democracy and welfare capitalism in the nineteenth century. Visions of Marxist-style revolution never gained broad support in Britain, and before World War I the British Labour Party, with its base in the practical, non-ideological trade-union movement, resisted identifying itself explicitly with socialist ideas. However, the experience of the war and the revolutionary enthusiasms immediately following it contributed to a sharp move toward doctrinaire socialism for Labour. Its program of 1918 announced that gradual reforms of capitalism, typical of the years before the war, were no longer adequate and that capitalism must be replaced by socialism: “What is to be reconstructed ... is ... society itself.”

However, a majority of Britain’s population was by no means ready for a reconstruction of society itself, and Labour’s first experiences in government in 1924 lasted less than a year. A second Labour government, from 1929 to 1931, was even more of a flop, ending in electoral rout, after which Conservative-dominated governments ruled throughout the 1930s. However, by 1945 much had changed: Britain had lived through a decade of depression and then six years of what many termed “war socialism”; that is, extensive control by the state in waging a desperate defense of the country. During those years Labour Party leaders served in prominent positions in the ruling coalition cabinets, gaining experience in national government and enjoying a rising public confidence. At war’s end, Labour benefited from the apprehension that a return to rule by the Conservative Party would lead to another depression. More generally, there was a sense in Britain that a period of heroic sacrifice was over, to be replaced by one devoted to long-postponed domestic concerns. Churchill and his party were judged ill-suited to deal with the nation’s new priorities.

This time Labour won an overwhelming victory (393 seats in Parliament to 213 for the Conservatives). The party’s electoral manifesto of June 1945 proclaimed that Labour was “a socialist party and proud of it.” Its goal was to establish a “Socialist Commonwealth ... free, democratic, efficient, and public-spirited.” That meant, among other measures, the nationalization of around a third of the nation’s principal industries, the takeover of the Bank of England, and the introduction of the national health program (“socialized medicine”).

Such measures certainly seemed a step in the direction of “real socialism.” Churchill warned that the British people were about to have a “harsh, tyrannical hand clapped across their mouths and nostrils.” But his rhetoric at this point tended to offend rather than inspire; his own daughter found it entirely over the top. She and others were especially incensed by his prediction that Labour rule would resemble that of the “Gestapo.” She remarked:

Socialism as practiced during the war did no one any harm The children of this country have never been so well fed or healthy The rich did not die because their meat ration was no larger than that of the poor This common sharing and feeling of sacrifice was one of [our] strongest bonds.

The Labour Party's self-effacing leader, Clement Attlee, was certainly no Lenin, but Churchill's notorious dismissal of him as "a sheep in sheep's clothing" was both unkind and undeserved. Much of what the Labour Party put into law was based on the Beveridge Report, prepared during the war by the head of the London School of Economics, Sir William Beveridge, and published in late 1942. It recommended wide-ranging government action to revive the economy after the war and to ensure a more secure, productive life for Britain's working classes. Beveridge believed in the value of the free market, and his own background was with the reforming tradition of the Liberal Party, not with Labour or the British socialists. Still, the comprehensiveness of his report stepped beyond what socialists had earlier termed Liberal "patchwork," and thus was in accord with most of Labour's recommendations, at least as beginning steps.

It is indicative of the temper of those years that Conservative leaders studiously avoided criticizing the Report, aside from some grumblings about how much implementing it would cost. That avoidance was transparently related to the remarkably positive popular response to it. According to polls, by the end of war the Report won support from a remarkable 86 percent of the British population. When the Conservatives returned to power in 1951, on a slim parliamentary majority, they sought mostly to fine-tune, not repeal, the measures introduced in the previous six years. This postwar consensus in favor of welfare capitalism lasted until the late 1970s (that is, until the "Thatcher revolution," discussed in Chapter 25).

Still, it cannot be said that Labour's efforts came close to "reconstructing society itself." Four-fifths of industry remained in private hands. The British had long been known for an obsessive concern with social class, and that concern also remained largely intact. For the rest of the century, intricate class hierarchies and hostilities stubbornly persisted, often glaringly evident in speech, manners, dress, and/or cultural tastes. Upward mobility and equality of opportunity proved elusive goals. Efforts to redistribute wealth through taxes on income and inheritance turned out to be less effective than anticipated: In the mid-1970s a survey indicated that around a fifth of Britain's population still owned nearly nine-tenths of the nation's wealth.

However, "failure" is too harsh a word for the years of Labour rule. Any evaluation of those years, especially of the austerity associated with them, needs to take into account the extent to which Britain's economy was in deep distress by the end of the war. In August, the eminent economist John Maynard Keynes warned that the country faced "without exaggeration, a financial Dunkirk." The most obvious explanation for Britain's condition was six years of terribly destructive war, but those years had been preceded by a decade of economic stagnation and depression, which had in turn been preceded by another war of unprecedented destructiveness. Trying to build a socialist society after decades of wanton destruction and economic dysfunction was certain to be frustrating. The country's savings had largely been wiped out, and it had incurred a staggering trade deficit during the war, with debts totaling over 14 billion dollars. The kinds of

measures envisaged by the Beveridge Report, let alone those of socialist visionaries, required substantial savings and productive surpluses. Britain had neither. Conservatives in power would have faced the same imposing realities.

Keynes's gloomy predictions contained an important qualifier: "without massive US aid." American Lend Lease had covered a large part of Britain's war-time deficits, but the American congress had stipulated that Lend Lease be terminated with the end of the war. In September Keynes was sent to Washington to negotiate a new loan, based on the argument that the economic collapse of Britain would not be in the interests of the United States. He persuaded the Americans to grant a loan of \$3.75 billion, to be repaid over fifty years at 2 percent interest. However, the loan was the cause of much rancor among the British: They were the ones who had stood up for democracy against Nazi tyranny – only now to be treated in this way by their war-time ally. The richest country in the world, its own territory undamaged by war, was acting like a skinflint. (The terms of the loan meant that Britain would be repaying the United States to the tune of \$140 million a year until the end of the century.)

As Cold War tensions increased in the next two years, the Congress of the United States showed itself more generous. Marshall Plan aid for Europe as a whole added up to over \$20 billion, but the British people were still obliged to endure a period of harsh austerity. Ironically, Germany, the defeated country and in a more desperate state than Britain at the end of the war, recovered more rapidly, at least its western half. Britain's insolvency had implications that reached beyond domestic issues, underlining the reality that it could no longer function as the world power it had been. Its inability to continue supporting the monarchists against the Communists in the Greek civil war, with the Americans then taking up the task, was one such implication. Britain's withdrawal from its worldwide imperial holdings was a related but much broader one. In many regards, the United States took over the rewards – and burdens – of European imperialism, even while officially supporting anti-imperialist movements.

Given how much "socialism" remained a dirty word for most Americans, it was ironic that Labour's program of 1945–51, emphasizing its socialist nature, would have been difficult if not impossible without American financial support. But, as noted, whether the measures taken by Labour moved the country significantly toward "real" socialism is another matter. The precise boundary line between democratic socialism and capitalism became a political issue in most countries of western Europe during the Cold War, in large part because of the preference of the Americans for a "liberal" variety of democracy, one that had close connections to the free market and private ownership of the means of production.

Democratic Socialism in Western Europe: Scandinavia

In that regard, it is interesting that another area of successful parliamentary democracy, Scandinavia, had also become socialistic. The Labour government's self-proclaimed socialism attracted more attention from Americans, but the Scandinavian social-democratic parties had a longer, generally more successful experience in office. Some observers came to the conclusion that Scandinavian democratic socialism, or simply

“the Scandinavian Way,” offered other nations a model for how the social wounds inflicted by capitalist development could be healed while at the same actually enhancing economic performance.

Scandinavia in the early nineteenth century had been among Europe’s poorer areas; by the 1970s it would be among the richest, and in the twentieth century that transformation (in its later stages) occurred mostly under social-democratic governments. However, the Scandinavian Way was made possible by a history and by material conditions that were revealingly different from those of most of the rest of the continent. Nordic Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) had much in common, including a Protestant background, high levels of literacy, languages and physical traits that resembled one another, compatible cultural values, and successful representative institutions. In terms of the social bases attracted to socialism, the most significant difference between Scandinavia and the rest of Europe was the lower level of friction between urban and rural workers. That relative closeness facilitated national political alliances of parties representing workers in city and countryside (“countryside” in this case included the large numbers of workers in the fishing and lumber industries). Similarly, relations between capital and labor, while certainly tense at times, were finally characterized by a greater willingness on both sides to compromise.

A further advantage for Sweden, which had the largest population (6.6 million in 1945) and the most highly developed industry of the three, was that it remained neutral in both wars, thereby not only avoiding the wars’ destruction but also benefiting from trade with Germany during them. From 1917 on, social-democratic leaders had entered into a series of coalition cabinets with non-socialist parties. At first they were junior partners, but in 1932 they negotiated a coalition with the Farmers’ Party, setting the stage for the relatively successful social-democratic leadership of the country during the Depression, a period during which the left elsewhere experienced frustration, defeat, and disaster. One of the areas in which the Swedish social democrats took bold initiatives during the Depression was in public expenditures to compensate for the lack of private investment, without feeling the need to balance the budget yearly. Social-democratic theorists, most famously Gunnar Myrdal, winner of the Nobel Prize in economics in 1974, argued that trying to balance the budget each year had the effect of accentuating deflationary trends whereas government expenditures in social services and public works would help to stimulate the economy. (Later commonly referred to as “deficit spending,” such notions were much in the air at the time; they also became known in the English-speaking world as “Keynesian,” after the above-mentioned John Maynard Keynes.)

Swedish socialism, and Scandinavian socialism more generally, differed from the British variety in the Scandinavian respect for private ownership of the means of production. Rather than having the state take over private enterprises, as Labour preferred, the Scandinavians were content to leave ownership in private hands, while taxing them stringently. There were other intricacies to the Scandinavian story that suggested it could not be considered an exact model for other areas, but its success by the 1960s achieved widespread admiration. The great majority of the Scandinavian population, in what had once been considered the impoverished “frozen north,” had begun to enjoy better health, to live longer, to be better educated, and to have a higher standard of material existence than the populations of any other area of Europe.

The Revolutionary Mystique, the Cult of Personality, and “Real” Socialism

Scandinavian socialism was faulted by conservative critics for making life too easy or even boring. The charge that life was too easy or that the changes in society were only superficial, leaving the capitalist ethic intact, could hardly be levied at the “real socialism” of the Soviet Union or the countries of eastern Europe after 1945. In those countries undeniably fundamental changes had occurred, political, economic, and social. Yet a substantial question lingered: Was this “real socialism” *really* socialism? The problems associated with describing Bolshevik rule as socialist, or even as successful in any rigorous sense, are major. And the “third revolution,” the purges of the late 1930s, can be considered the utter antithesis of the ideals of the Enlightenment. Overall, given the enormous suffering of Soviet Russia’s population from 1917 to 1939, the entire “Soviet experiment” could be dismissed as a failure, at times a nightmarish one.

Nonetheless, by the end of the war, after the Battle of Stalingrad and the defeat of Hitler’s armies, the mystique of the Homeland of the Revolution revived to a phenomenal extent, resulting in a new generation of revolutionary idealists rallying to the banners of the Communist movement. Although the Cold War also marked a reassertion of militant anti-Communism in western Europe and the United States, powerful Communist parties reemerged in a number of western democracies, most notably in Italy and France, without the presence of the Red Army. The mystique of Soviet Communism also regained its power during the Cold War for a large number of prominent intellectuals (dubbed “fellow travelers” since they were not actual party members).

Stalin also reemerged as the personification of the revolutionary mystique in these years. When he died in early March 1953, at age seventy-four, millions of Soviet citizens gave in to what was widely described as hysterical grief. That grief was hardly because Stalin had mellowed in his old age. On the contrary, in the last years of his life he became ever more sickly suspicious. Only his death put a halt to what promised to be a new round of trials and mass arrests, in both the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc. And this time the antisemitic undertones of the purges of the 1930s became more explicit. The creation of Israel in 1948 seems to have awakened Stalin’s suspicion that the Jews had never been genuinely loyal citizens, and undoubtedly many Soviet Jews did express enthusiasm for the new Jewish state. After 1948, the Soviet government began to take measures to reduce the overrepresentation of Jews in various arenas and in other ways to make life difficult for them. Among the many ominous developments shortly before Stalin’s death was the charge that a number of prominent doctors, nearly all of whom were Jewish, had plotted to poison Stalin and other Soviet leaders.

In the same years, the cult of personality around Stalin grew to Orwellian dimensions. Even Hitler at the peak of his popularity was not acclaimed with such extravagance as Stalin came to be. The comparison with Nazi Germany is all the more striking in that the German Führer was a charismatic orator who had won a large popular following before becoming chancellor and, as Germany’s ruler, was plausibly credited with bringing order, prosperity, and international respect to the country. Stalin, in contrast, was a poor orator, a short, pock-marked man who only rarely made public speeches. And he had overseen more than two decades in which untold millions of ordinary Soviet

citizens had been arrested and sent to prison camps, to say nothing of those millions of peasants who starved to death during collectivization.

Titoism and the New Show Trials

By the late 1940s Stalin's lieutenants lived in special dread of his disfavor, which obviously colored their public adulation of him. They could hardly forget that in the late 1930s it was not only Old Bolsheviks who had been purged but also many of Stalin's own younger protégés. Comparable acclaim for Stalin was expressed by Communist leaders in the Eastern Bloc countries. Even in the western democracies, Communist leaders generally went along with Stalin's elevation to god-like status. The one Communist country in which the Stalin cult encountered significant resistance was Yugoslavia, where the Communist Partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito, had fought off the Nazis and come to power largely through their own efforts, not those of the Red Army. Before World War II, Tito had been an obedient Stalinist, but by the end of the war he had begun to chafe under Stalin's insistence on unquestioning conformity to Soviet dictates. Other Communist leaders had shown some inclination to independence, but they lacked Tito's popularity in their own countries and understood that they could not retain political power without Soviet support.

Ironically, one of the ways that Tito had initially shown independence was in making social revolution part of the war-time program of his Partisans, whereas the official line from Moscow was for Communists to avoid pressing for social revolution in the name of preserving the broadest possible anti-fascist alliance. As frictions proliferated between the two countries, Stalin tried to discredit Tito, but he came to realize that, short of a military invasion of Yugoslavia – a risky proposition in these years – he was stymied. He then went to great lengths to assure that no other Communists would follow Tito's example.

Being charged with Titoism became the rough postwar equivalent of being charged with Trotskyism in the late 1930s. From 1949 until Stalin's death, arrests and show trials proliferated throughout eastern Europe. One of the most famous occurred in another country where Communists enjoyed popular support in the early postwar period, Czechoslovakia. In late November 1951, the Communist Party chief, Rudolf Slánský, was arrested, along with thirteen others, and charged with a range of crimes, including Titoism and Zionism. (Slánský and ten of the other defendants were Jewish.) In the show trial a full year later – that much time was required to build a plausible case and “prepare” the defendants – Slánský not only confessed but asked to be given the death penalty. He was hanged five days after the guilty verdict was handed down.

The show trials in eastern Europe also reflected the power struggles within the various Communist parties, but there is little question of Stalin's ultimate responsibility for them. That point is related to the familiar one of Stalin's personal role in the history of the Soviet Union since the mid-1920s. Revealingly, once Stalin was laid to rest, the arrests subsided and the trials were abruptly abandoned. Still, immediately after Stalin's death there was much uncertainty, as his lieutenants jockeyed for position. It was obvious that none of them could rule as Stalin had, but uncertainty prevailed in regard to what the alternatives might be. There was no heir apparent. Indeed, what seemed most noticeable at first was the general mediocrity of those lieutenants, reflecting Stalin's vigilance in assuring that no one came close to rivaling him.

Stalin's Death and Khrushchev's "De-Stalinization"

For many of those who retained hopes for the Soviet Union as the Homeland of the Revolution, Stalin's death opened prospects of a new era. For others the prevailing sentiment was a gnawing apprehension about the possibility of chaos and civil war. Would Stalin's lieutenants, themselves all deeply implicated in his crimes, be able to rise above their pasts? Or were they in truth little different, especially in moral qualities, from the entourage of the other great totalitarian leader of the day, Adolf Hitler? If so, it was yet another indication of what an abysmal failure the "Soviet experiment" had been.

A crucial stage in the power struggle occurred in late June 1953, with the arrest of Lavrenti Beria, the feared head of the secret police. Stalin had once referred to him as "our Himmler," and Beria's secret police certainly rivaled the Nazi SS in brutality. In June, Beria was charged with having been a spy for the West for the past thirty years, as well as planning to restore capitalism to the Soviet Union. He was executed in December, almost immediately after being found guilty in a transparently rigged court hearing. The preposterous charges against him and his immediate execution after sentencing recalled the methods of the 1930s, and further suggested the extent to which Stalinist habits remained among those who would soon be proclaiming their desire to de-Stalinize Soviet Russia.

Stalin's lieutenants spoke of the need for "collective leadership" and "socialist legality," or Leninist standards of party rule. After a period of complex maneuvers, Nikita Khrushchev proved to be the most politically adroit – and certainly the most colorful – of Stalin's lieutenants. He also seemed more genuinely motivated by revolutionary idealism than they, retaining a belief in Communism's inherent superiority to capitalism, once freed of Stalinist excesses.

In late February 1956, the full extent of Khrushchev's break with Stalinism was laid out in an impassioned, four-hour speech, beginning at midnight and delivered to a session of the twentieth party congress, with some 1400 delegates present. Denouncing "the cult of personality and its consequences," Khrushchev described Stalin's rule in surprisingly frank detail. He no doubt shocked some of his listeners, but his speech was often interrupted by applause. Khrushchev later admitted that he too had been "infected" by Stalinism, and implicit in his speech was the uncomfortable point that virtually all Soviet leaders had been implicated in Stalin's crimes. In that regard as in others, the speech constituted a remarkably bold gamble.

However, Khrushchev was careful to restrict his explicit denunciations to Stalin's personality, not to Communism as a ruling system. He thus described the collectivization of agriculture and the five-year plans as "necessary" to preserve the revolution, while Stalin's purges were not. Khrushchev did suggest some adjustments in Communist theory, for example by accepting the possibility of "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist powers; the victory of Communism throughout the world could come without war between nations. That conclusion was much influenced by the advent of atomic weapons but also by Khrushchev's own experiences in war and by his related understanding of how much the Soviet people yearned for peace.

Khrushchev recognized in his speech that paths to Communism could be different from the Soviet model, which helped to reduce tensions with Tito and implicitly

dismissed as unfounded the charges against those “national deviationists” already purged in eastern Europe. However, the concept of acceptably different paths still retained vaguely defined limits, and for a Soviet leader to admit that the Soviet Union had given disastrously poor leadership in the past opened a Pandora’s box, leading to a series of dramatic crises for the rest of the year and contributing to an enduring change in the nature of international Communism.

In a related way, some of the points made in Khrushchev’s speech touched upon long-standing ambiguities of Leninist theory. Prominent among them was its exaggerated elitism, which had allowed Communists to feel justified in resorting to violence, even terror, to maintain their rule. But a stubborn element of the revolutionary mystique was the assumption that a majority of the common people supported social revolution. That concept, already dubious in 1917, was even more so in many eastern-European countries by the early 1950s. Khrushchev’s move away from using Stalinist terror as a ruling device inevitably implied that Communist leaders would need to pay more attention to gaining popularity. He took a number of steps to achieve greater popular support inside the Soviet Union, such as emphasizing consumer-goods production, freeing political prisoners, and initiating a more peaceful foreign policy. Nonetheless, how these initiatives would play out remained highly uncertain both in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. What some were hoping for was to move well beyond Leninism, toward a less elitist strain of revolutionary socialism, most famously represented in the past by Rosa Luxemburg, or what would later be termed “Communism with a human face” (further described in Chapter 25). What Khrushchev himself intended is uncertain, no doubt because many of his own ideas were patently exploratory. Whatever the slippage back to Stalinist practices after 1956 (“neo-Stalinism”), the repressive methods under Khrushchev and his successors were distinctly less violent and “totalitarian” than those under Stalin.

Khrushchev managed to remain in power until October 1964. His efforts to revive both the Soviet economy and the reputation of Communism experienced ups and downs but cannot be termed successful, especially given the grandiose claims he made about the future economic productivity of Communism. He was replaced abruptly but without violence and allowed to retire, though kept under guard. It later became known that he fell into a deep depression in his retirement years, but he managed to dictate memoirs, never published in the Soviet Union and known only after they were smuggled to the West. No doubt the fascinating details of those memoirs are part of the reason that historians generally have a more sympathetic sense of him than is the case for the gray, uninspiring figures who succeeded him. Khrushchev was energetic and down to earth – often shockingly crude in language. He ranks as the most “human” of the post-Stalin leaders, at least until the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s. After Khrushchev retired, his young grandson was once asked: “What is your grampa doing these days?” His reply: “Grampa cries.”

Revolts in Poland and Hungary, 1956

Khrushchev remained a convinced Communist, hardened by the many harsh years in Soviet history. For him, as with other Soviet leaders, the desire to move away from the worst Stalinist extremes hardly meant that he respected Western-style liberal democracy. Most Soviet leaders were distrustful of the prospect of any substantial change in

the way the country had been ruled since the mid-1920s. Within a short time after Khrushchev's speech, a crucial test came in Poland, a land often featured in previous chapters as uniquely troubled or "martyred," where hatred of both Russian imperialism and Communism was especially deep. After Khrushchev's speech, popular agitation against Communist rule in Poland mounted, reaching violent levels by October.

Władysław Gomułka was prominent among the relatively popular Communist leaders in Poland. In the late 1940s, he had been purged as a national deviationist, but in December 1954 he was released from prison, in the thaw following Stalin's death. By 1956, with a reshuffling of the government in response to popular discontent, he was an obvious candidate to resume a leadership role. Remarkably, his own bitter experiences had not caused him to lose his attachment to the mystique associated with Communist Party rule and its necessary Soviet "partnership." When an initially suspicious Khrushchev met Gomułka in October 1956, he threatened and blustered but Gomułka was not intimidated, and, as recounted in Khrushchev's memoirs, the two finally hit it off. Gomułka was then allowed considerable latitude in ruling Poland.

A violent clash of Soviet and Polish forces was narrowly averted, and again the crucial role of personality seems obvious. Gomułka remained in power until 1970, six years longer than Khrushchev himself. While at first proclaiming, to cheering crowds, "the Party will lead Poland along a new path to socialism!," he later became identified with the repressions of neo-Stalinism, including the antisemitism that drove out most of those Jews remaining in the country, among them a large number of Communist Party members.

In Hungary, also with a population historically hostile to Russian imperialism and Communism, averting a violent confrontation proved more difficult. The worry of Soviet leaders that events in Poland would have a domino effect proved justified. The Stalinists previously in power in Hungary, notorious for the grotesque purge trials they staged before Stalin's death, were attempting a comeback. Imre Nagy, a Hungarian Communist leader who seemed to resemble Gomułka, had served as premier for two years (from 1953 to 1955), but maneuvers by the Stalinist faction had deposed him. Thereafter popular unrest increased, and by the autumn of 1956 it had assumed strongly anti-Soviet dimensions.

These developments so alarmed Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders that they reluctantly resorted to force. But, because the ensuing clashes between Soviet forces and Hungarian irregulars threatened to escalate into chaos, Soviet leaders accepted Nagy's promises that, returned to power, he would be able to calm the situation, much as Gomułka had. Those promises proved ill-founded; before long, Nagy had associated himself with popular demands for a complete withdrawal of Soviet troops. He even began to speak, to widespread acclaim, of an unallied, multiparty future for Hungary.

Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders angrily concluded that Nagy was a traitor to the Communist cause, and they ordered a full-scale military invasion of Hungary in November. That invasion ranks as the most violent clash of the Cold War years in Europe, resulting in around 3000 deaths and a mass emigration out of Hungary (estimated at 200,000, about 2 percent of the country's total population, but consisting of a much larger percentage of Budapest's residents, especially students). Some 35,000 Hungarians were arrested in postinvasion measures and around 300 given death sentences, including Nagy.

The invasion was intended to impress other dissidents in the Soviet Bloc, but it had a range of repercussions. Communist parties in western-European countries experienced a drop in membership, and a number of previously sympathetic intellectuals turned hostile. However, the reaction of the American president, Dwight Eisenhower, was reassuring, insofar as he indicated that the United States was not pursuing a policy of liberating eastern Europe (even if some of his cabinet members spoke as if they favored such a policy). Cold War tensions were at least recognized as stable; the spheres of influence established at the end of the war were to remain in place.

The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962

After 1956, in spite of promises by both sides to work for “peaceful coexistence,” areas of continued tension remained. What historians now consider the most terrifying moment of the Cold War occurred in October 1962, with the Cuban Missile Crisis, and again Khrushchev played a decisive role. Fidel Castro had come to power in Cuba in January 1959, at first with American support, but his subsequent move toward establishing a Communist regime in the island was viewed by American leaders much as Nagy’s move toward a non-Communist Hungary was viewed by Soviet leaders. However, Castro proved both more popular and more difficult to remove than Nagy. The poorly planned Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, led by CIA-trained Cuban exiles, turned into a humiliating fiasco for the newly elected American President, John F. Kennedy.

It seemed unlikely, in spite of that failure, that the Americans would long tolerate a Communist regime ninety miles from Florida, and Khrushchev, to prevent another invasion, proposed to Castro that Soviet long-range missiles with atomic warheads be installed in Cuba. Castro readily accepted. American high-altitude surveillance of Cuba soon detected the missile sites under construction. In a nerve-racking confrontation in mid-October, during which the world held its breath, Kennedy demanded their removal. Khrushchev in due course backed down, agreeing to dismantle the sites and turn back the Soviet ships heading for Cuba with missiles on board. On a public level at least, the victory seemed entirely to belong to the United States, but Khrushchev’s achievements were real if less publicized, in that Kennedy agreed never to invade Cuba and to dismantle the American missile sites that had been installed in Turkey, on the Soviet border (these aspects of the agreements were long kept secret).

Ironically, the Communist regime in Cuba survived longer than the Soviet empire in Europe, and Castro ultimately ruled longer than any Communist leader in history. That story lies outside the history of Europe, but it did have a number of implications for Europe and the status of Communism in it. Castro was another Communist who, even more than Tito, could make credible claims to substantial and long-lasting popular support. He was also more than a Soviet puppet, even if he did become dependent upon Soviet economic aid. Further detracting from the leadership of the Soviet Union in world Communism, in 1949 Mao Zedong had come into power in China, the world’s most populous country, without the kind of Soviet aid that made Communist takeovers in

eastern Europe possible. Before long the Chinese Communists were not only putting Soviet leadership into question but denouncing Khrushchev as a “revisionist” betrayer of Marxism – to say nothing of his being described (unofficially) as a “bald-headed idiot.”

Castro’s Communism, like that of the Soviet Union and the eastern-European peoples’ republics, proved an economic failure, but he remained a hero for many Cubans and for others in Latin America. Mao ultimately became an even more demented leader than Stalin, and, if it was possible to surpass, in pure absurdity, the cult around Stalin, the Chinese Communists did so in their cult of Mao. Mao’s most easily measured claim to “greatness” was in the number of people who perished or suffered horribly under his rule. He initiated a series of ill-conceived and poorly executed programs, and he incited mass hysteria in the so-called Cultural Revolution; together these resulted in an estimated 40 to 70 million deaths. He not only wreaked havoc on China’s economy but also inspired actions that destroyed irreplaceable cultural treasures. There were some in Europe who found inspiration in Mao’s leadership – for example, the noted French intellectual Jean-Paul Sartre – but overall it must be concluded that Mao personally served even more than Stalin to associate the revolutionary mystique with mass murder and economic failure.

East Germany and the Berlin Wall

In the five years from the Hungarian uprising to the confrontation over Cuba, it had been the two Germanies and the status of Berlin that loomed as the major area of friction in the Cold War in Europe, and again the story of the two German states had relevance to the issue of Communism vs. capitalism. West Germany enjoyed rapid economic growth in the postwar period, whereas East Germany’s recovery was much slower. The difference soon became so substantial that migration from the Communist to the capitalist side, via Berlin (which still had open borders, as stipulated by the Potsdam conference), became a near flood; some 2.6 million East Germans left between 1946 and 1961, an especially telling number because so many of them were young and educated, as had been the case in Hungary in 1956. These millions who voted with their feet clashed impressively with Khrushchev’s vision of a shining Communist future and the inevitable collapse of capitalism.

The migration out of East Germany was the most important background to the construction of the Berlin Wall, and the Wall came to be one of the most notorious symbols during the Cold War of Communism’s failure. The world press was filled with stories of East Germans killed in daring attempts to escape through the Wall. A high point of President Kennedy’s short career was his speech in Berlin, on June 26, 1963, when he declared, to a wildly enthusiastic crowd, “Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is ‘*Ich bin ein Berliner!*’” (I am a Berliner).

It was not easy, however, for some observers to put aside memories that, only two decades earlier, larger crowds in Berlin had even more enthusiastically cheered Adolf Hitler. At the time of Kennedy’s speech, moreover, the victory of the West in the Cold War was hardly assured, and five months later he was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. When Khrushchev had met Kennedy in 1961, he had concluded that the inexperienced young president could be bullied. Khrushchev’s words about capitalism’s



Figure 23.1 “I’m sorry, kids! It was, like, just an idea I had!” Roland Beier: Marx cartoon, 1990. Source: © Roland Beier.

demise – and his infamous taunt, “We will bury you!” – might be cited as a competing assertion to Kennedy’s boast at Berlin. The comparison is apt both in terms of the confident assertiveness of both leaders and in the way that others remained unconvinced.

Western defenders of capitalist democracy might well have retorted: “No, we are burying *you*!” No need for the future tense; the contradictions of Communism were dooming *it* to collapse, if not to die a lingering, humiliating death (as it ultimately did).

Further Reading

Stalin’s last years are amply covered by Dmitri Volkogonov’s *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (1998). Volkogonov was earlier a prominent Soviet official; he also wrote one of the first scholarly biographies of Lenin after the collapse of the Soviet Union, using previously inaccessible Soviet archives (*Lenin: A New Biography*, 1994). A work by another historian who grew up in the Soviet period, Roy Medvedev, covers Stalin’s last years and attempts an overall evaluation of Stalinism: *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (1989).

Two books dealing with Khrushchev and his reforms stand out: William Taubman's *Nikita Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (winner of a Pulitzer Prize, 2004) and Strobe Talbott, ed., *Khrushchev Remembers* (1974), Khrushchev's remarkable memoirs, with commentary by the editor and other scholars.

Robert Service's *Comrades! A History of World Communism* (2010) provides an overview of European Communism from a worldwide perspective.

Giles MacDonogh's *After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation* (2007), like Abzug's (see Further Reading, Chapter 24) earlier work, provides information still largely unknown by (and uncomfortable for) those living in the victorious countries after the end of the war.

24 The End of Imperialism, and European Recovery 1948–68

Within a twenty-year period, Europeans recovered from the ravages of war and largely relinquished their worldwide empire. It was a time of healing and economic recovery on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In western Europe, parliamentary democracies were established in most countries, and the first steps, at first slow and uncertain, toward European economic and political unification were taken.

These two decades marked a dawning awareness of the full horrors of Hitler's rule, also a slow process at first, even after the Nuremberg trials, but by the late 1960s becoming a major issue of an evolving European identity. The process was yet slower in regard to an understanding of the horrors of Stalin's rule, in part because Soviet archives remained closed and Soviet historians operated under strict supervision.

European Exhaustion and the End of Empire

The collapse of Europe's world empire largely overlapped with the period of its deepest despair and self-doubt, but even the British, with the most far-flung of all empires, had long been of two minds about the benefits of imperialism, and in 1945 the anti-imperialist Labour Party took up the reins of government. On the Continent, there had been even more disagreement about imperialism, the left mostly in opposition, the right largely in favor. However, even on the left, especially in France, there was a long-standing tendency to see European rule as "civilizing" and mostly beneficial to non-Europeans, even while the brutality and exploitative nature of colonial rule were condemned.

By 1945, Europeans had engaged in a prolonged civil war that left them numb and exhausted, simply incapable of maintaining the imperial rule of the past, and less

certain that imperialism was justifiable, economically or morally. Moreover, the United States, now the world's greatest power, was historically anti-imperialist (whatever its own emerging if ill-recognized imperialist tendencies). Perhaps the most decisive factor was that, while Europeans had been destroying one another by the millions, non-European peoples had been growing in absolute and relative numbers, many at the same time beginning to embrace the kind of nationalist intoxication that had brought Europeans to ruin. Even in those non-European areas where local elites were patently unprepared to take over and where national boundaries were highly uncertain, nationalist passions raged, and European rule was considered no longer bearable.

There was great variety across the globe in the details of the dismantling of Europe's empire. Scores of new states were established, in principle sovereign but in fact not even close to becoming nation-states in the modern European sense. Most were immediately plagued by internal unrest verging on chaos. That story cannot be covered in an overview of European history, but developments in a few non-European areas did have a special and direct connection to European history from 1945 to the early 1960s, most notably India, Vietnam, Palestine, and Algeria.

European self-destruction was crucial: Nazi Germany had conquered most of the European continent – including the Netherlands and France, prominent imperialist countries – while greatly weakening Britain, but was then itself destroyed. At the same time, the Japanese overran many of the areas in Asia that had been under the rule of those three main imperial powers, accelerating their already declining prestige with the local populations. Then Japanese rule was also destroyed. Moreover, by 1949 the Communists had triumphed over the Nationalists in China, giving support to the Vietnamese Communist leader, Ho Chi Minh (yet another genuinely popular Communist leader). The stubborn efforts of French statesmen after 1945 to retain control over Vietnam proved calamitous, by 1954 costing the French around 200,000 dead and wounded and some 8.5 billion dollars – three times what France obtained through Marshall Plan aid.

India and the Middle East

Since 1919, India, the “jewel in the crown” of the British empire, had been the scene of rising agitation for independence, led by the pacifist Mohandas Gandhi. British defenders of the empire argued that India's deep divisions, already the cause of numerous clashes in the interwar years, would result in civil war if independence came too quickly. Muslim leaders in India, similarly, warned that they could not accept a Hindu-dominated unitary Indian state, but Gandhi and other Indian leaders opposed a partition into Hindu and Muslim areas. British Prime Minister Attlee favored a rapid departure from India – which came even sooner (in mid-August 1947) than he had originally intended. In the final arrangements, the Muslim leaders obtained the partition they had demanded, but then, as predicted, widespread violence ensued in the autumn of 1947. Some 9 million Muslims fled into either west or east Pakistan (1000 miles apart, on opposite sides of the Indian subcontinent), and approximately the same number of Hindus fled out of Muslim-majority areas. Hundreds of thousands were killed in the process, and in January 1948 Gandhi himself was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic. The

new states, Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India, remained at daggers drawn well into the next century. In 1971, East Pakistan became a separate state, Bangladesh, while India, with a population of 350 million in the years immediately following independence, retained an often restive Muslim population of some 60 million.

Closer to Europe, geographically and culturally, most of the remaining mandated areas in the Middle East that had been established after World War I became independent nation-states, as did most of north Africa. In 1946 the French relinquished control of Syria and Lebanon, and the British likewise ceded control of Jordan, with relatively few problems. However, decisions about the fate of the British mandate in Palestine proved more troublesome. Already a hot spot in the interwar period, it came to qualify as the most contested area of former European imperialism in the world, remaining unresolved well into the twenty-first century. Its troubles repeatedly affected the relations of European nations to one another and to the United States, as well as sparking bitter debates within the Jewish communities of the world. The Jewish Question found a new center in the Middle East.

Compared to what the British faced in India, the situation in the Palestinian Mandate, tiny in population and territory, was on the face of it relatively simple. However, since 1919, plans and proposals by British authorities had repeatedly proved unacceptable to both Jews and Arabs. The dilemmas were real, to a large extent connected to the contradictions of the Balfour Declaration. A democratic state embracing all of the Palestinian Mandate would have had a decisive Arab majority and was thus unacceptable to the Zionists, since a central Zionist goal was to escape domination by non-Jews. Moreover, there was little question that any Arab-controlled Palestinian state would be hostile to the Jewish population that had been arriving, under constant and vehement Arab protest, since 1919. An Arab-controlled state would also have been dead set against any further Jewish immigration. (The Arab population in Palestine was around 65 percent in 1947; it had been over 90 percent in 1919.) Any effort to divide the area into Arab and Jewish parts, given the geographical mixture of the two populations, would have resulted in crazy-quilt borders. Moreover, for the foreseeable future, any Jewish-majority state would necessarily have been very small and vulnerable to the hostile Arab states that surrounded it. A peaceful solution seemed highly unlikely, and in fact Arab-Israeli wars broke out in every decade after World War II, halted each time by shaky armistices and continuing smaller-scale violence.

In the period immediately following World War II, the British had many other competing concerns, domestic and foreign. Financially strapped and thoroughly fed up with terrorist atrocities by radical Zionist factions against British officials, the Labour government turned the matter over to the United Nations. A specially appointed committee came up with a partition plan in November 1947, which gained support from both the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as a majority of the UN General Assembly. The plan envisaged a Jewish sector with a bare Jewish majority (some 560,000 Jews and 400,000 Arabs) and another sector with a much stronger Arab majority. The Zionist leaders were not happy with the plan; they had hoped for more Jewish immigration and a more solid majority before any formal partition, but they finally assented. In May 1948 they formally declared the establishment of the state of Israel. To no one's surprise, Arab leaders refused recognition of both the UN plan and the new Jewish state. The predicted violence was not long in coming: Five Arab states (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan,

Lebanon, and Syria) sent troops into the area of the mandate. Less predictably – in fact seeming miraculous to many at the time – the Jews (now terming themselves Israelis) emerged victorious in that war.

The nature of the Israeli victory resolved some major dilemmas for the new Jewish state, since in the course of the war around 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled the combat zones, most of them driven by orders from Israeli military officials but also by fear of Israeli political terrorists, or simply to avoid being caught in the crossfires of war. (The earlier claim that they left their homes and villages primarily in response to Arab calls lacks evidence and is no longer accepted by most historians.) Thereafter, Israeli authorities refused to allow the refugees to return, and in the following years Israeli settlers took over extensive areas previously inhabited by Palestinian Arabs, while hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arab refugees were settled into squalid camps. This was not the same kind of population exchange that had occurred in India, since it overwhelmingly involved the flight of Arabs out of Palestine but not of Jews; it was more akin to the mass flight westward of Germans at the end of World War II, but that comparison is also faulty, since the German refugees were eventually incorporated into the new German states whereas the Palestinians largely remained in the camps and were not integrated into other Arab states.

Obviously, too, what Nazi Germany had done in the previous six years put German refugees into a different category from the Palestinian refugees. Similarly, the deaths and atrocities in Europe associated with driving populations from one territory to another exceeded by a huge margin those of the Israelis and Arabs in 1948–9. Population exchanges were common in the 1940s, not only in Europe but in the rest of the world, involving tens of millions of refugees. Sensitivities everywhere were deadened by years of war, and most Europeans, overwhelmed with their own misery, paid little attention to the plight of the Palestinians. Over the next seven decades, however, few refugee problems remained such a sore point, so seemingly intractable, as those associated with former Palestine.

By the time of the 1949 armistice, the new Jewish state ended up with control over about one-third more territory than had been allocated to the Jewish sector in the UN plan, and with a far more solid majority of Jews. Such “realities on the ground” acquired decisive importance because no formal peace treaty followed the 1949 armistice. In the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel occupied most of the territory of the original Palestinian mandate, as well as of Egypt’s Sinai peninsula and Syria’s Golan Heights. How much of the land occupied by military victory would thereafter be made into permanent Israeli territory remained uncertain, but settlements numbering hundreds of thousands of Israelis were instituted in the following years, provoking worldwide protests.

New Dimensions of the Jewish Question

The creation of a Jewish state resolved or at least alleviated some aspects of the Jewish Question, most urgently in providing a home for Jewish refugees in Europe. But the unresolved problems were major. Most of the Jews of the world expressed relief over the events of 1948–9, but for the Arabs the creation of Israel and the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians loomed as *al-nakhsba*, the Catastrophe – a flagrant injustice and unbearable



Map 24.1 Palestine, 1948.

humiliation for a proud people, themselves aspiring to independence and respect. That humiliation fed an often fanatical hatred for the new state of Israel and for those Diaspora Jews who so fervently supported it. As far as the Arabs and many others in the Muslim world were concerned, the Jewish Question was a European question, but the Europeans – aided to a decisive degree by the United States – were attempting to resolve their guilt over what had happened to the Jews in Europe at the expense of the Palestinians, who had no responsibility for the Holocaust.

Zionist Jews argued that the Palestinian territories were their historic homeland, to which they were now returning, but the more persuasive argument was that the hatred Jews encountered everywhere left them few choices. After 1948, around a half-million Jews departed from Arab lands, most heading for the new Jewish state. Jews from other parts of the world also came: In total some 2 million arrived in Israel in the next two



Figure 24.1 Arriving in Palestine. A soldier of the British Parachute Regiment with newly arrived Jewish refugees at a port in the British Mandate of Palestine, 1947. *Source:* Popperfoto / Getty Images.

decades. However, only a few thousand came from the United States, where the largest population of Jews continued to live (around 5 million in the 1940s). In fact, in subsequent years emigration out of Israel to the United States exceeded emigration out of the United States to Israel, a development that provoked expressions of dismay and disgust on the part of Israeli leaders.

The other remaining largest concentration of Jews at the end of World War II was in the Soviet Union (at least several million, though the exact numbers are uncertain). Soviet Jews did not emigrate in significant numbers in the decades immediately following the war, mostly because they were not allowed to do so by Soviet authorities. Some 400,000 Soviet Jews were finally permitted to depart for Israel in 1989–92, and in total over a million Soviet Jews left the Soviet Union from the time of Stalin's death to the collapse of the Soviet empire, helping to push the population of Jews in Israel to around 6 million by the end of the century. An Arab minority of around 20 percent remained in Israel in the early twenty-first century, and a majority of the world's Jews continued to live outside the Jewish state.

It would seem natural to describe the events in Palestine from 1945 to 1949 as an aspect of the demise of European imperialism, but many non-European nations, not only Arabs and Muslims, viewed the creation of the state of Israel in an entirely different light – that is, as an expression of neo-imperialism. The European origin of nearly all Israel's first leaders was undeniable. The European background of those leaders was particularly relevant insofar as they considered themselves superior in terms of level of civilization to the Palestinian Arabs. Such convictions, linked to the above-mentioned belief that persecuted Jews had a greater need for the land, constituted one of the several justifications for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Lord Balfour, it will be recalled, had stated the matter starkly, even before the Holocaust: "Zionism ... is rooted in age-long traditions, present needs, and future hopes of far profounder import than the desires of 700,000 Arabs."

"French" Algeria

The situation in Algeria, which was under French rule, had some revealing similarities to that in British-ruled Palestine, and it also became a long-lasting and hugely divisive issue in France. Neighboring Tunisia and Morocco, also under French domination, gained full independence in 1956. The processes by which they gained independence were not always smooth, but, compared to the bloody developments in Algeria, those countries remained on reasonably good terms with France. In Algeria, as in Palestine, settlers from Europe faced a large population of native Arab residents, but large numbers of European settlers had arrived in Algeria earlier than in Palestine. Only about 10 percent of those settlers were of French origin; most came from other European areas of the Mediterranean, but they nonetheless gradually assumed the French language and French identity.

That process of assimilation included the Jews among them, although bunching Algeria's Jews with non-Jews as "European settlers" is problematic, since Jews had lived in the area since the late Middle Ages. The Jews, both long-established and newer arrivals, had been granted equality to European settlers by the French government in 1870, whereas the Arab majority was largely denied full civil equality. By the end of World War II, there were around a million European settlers in Algeria and about ten times that number of Arabs, roughly the proportion of Jews and Arabs in Palestine in 1919. (There had also been a population of Jews in Palestine for centuries, mostly in Jerusalem, but in much smaller numbers.)

There was another interesting similarity between the two areas: The Algerian Arab population, sparse at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had experienced a remarkable population increase by the twentieth century. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, a fiercely debated issue emerged over how large the Arab population in Palestine had been before Europeans came to rule it: Was the area "a land without people for a people [the Jews] without land," as some Zionists maintained, or had there been a well-established Arab population for centuries? In a related way, to what extent had the Arabs living in Palestine by 1945 moved into the area in the recent past? These points were related to questions about the validity of a separate Palestinian Arab

identity, since "Palestine" had previously been more of a vague geographic expression than a term referring to a long-existing or distinct ethnic entity of the people living in the areas.

In both cases, European rule had proven attractive to Arab settlement and rapid population growth in general. The Jews in Algeria, numbering around 125,000 by the end of World War II, faced hostility from both the non-Jewish European settlers and the Arabs; anti-Jewish riots in Algeria during the Dreyfus Affair had been much more violent than in mainland France, but Algerian Jewish identity nonetheless remained overwhelmingly pro-French, rarely pro-Arab. Again, as in Palestine, the Jewish population vehemently opposed the notion of majority rule by Arabs, as did the non-Jewish European population.

There was abundant recourse to terror by both sides in Palestine before, during, and after the war of 1948–9, but in Algeria it was yet more extreme. Full-scale war in Algeria lasted around seven years, with a significantly higher death toll than in Palestine. In the decades following World War II, approximately a million Arab civilians were killed, with special intensity from 1954 to 1961. A large proportion of that death toll was the result of Arab-on-Arab terror, since the more radical factions sought to destroy the more moderate. But French military forces also amply engaged in torture in their attempt to destroy Arab nationalist forces. Those efforts were in vain; Algeria finally gained its independence in 1962 (described below).

Both Algeria and Israel, after they gained independence, adopted nationality laws. Israel offered formal civil equality to its non-Jewish minority (mostly Arab), and the Israeli Law of Return, passed in 1950 (with subsequent legislation and adjustments, especially in 1970), offered citizenship to anyone with one Jewish grandparent. The 1963 nationality law of the newly independent Algerian state granted citizenship only to Muslims, but by that time the European settlers had departed en masse. The Algerian nationality law stipulated that only those immigrants whose father and paternal grandfather were Muslim could become citizens of the new state. In contrast, traditional Jewish law, or *halakha*, defined Jewishness as deriving from the maternal rather than paternal side, but in fact the Israeli Law of Return broke with Jewish tradition in offering immediate citizenship to those who had one Jewish parent or grandparent, whatever their sex.

The Law of Return had many intricacies that reflected the fact that among the European refugees seeking entry into Israel were people who were not Jews according to *halakha* but who had nonetheless suffered persecution as Jews by the Nazis and other antisemites. It was thus considered appropriate to offer them citizenship in the new Jewish state. However, that step spawned enduring difficulties, since Israeli citizens whose Jewishness did not conform to *halakha* faced obstacles to exercising full citizenship. For example, without formal conversion to Orthodox Judaism, they could not marry a "real" Jew in Israel, by the dictates of the Orthodox rabbis who had been given control over issues of marriage, birth, and death. Eventually the growing relative numbers and political power of what came to be termed "ultra-Orthodox" Jews in Israel provoked hostility from the less strictly observant Jewish majority of the country, especially because the ultra-Orthodox generally avoided military service.

The Vagaries of Historical Memory: The Role of the Cold War

The Nazi Final Solution to the Jewish Question obviously was crucial in gaining support in Europe for the creation of the state of Israel, but the attitudes of Europeans to Jews and Israel thereafter evolved in sometimes surprising directions. Similarly, what was “remembered” about the traumatic war years varied significantly from country to country: “Mastering the past” came to mean different things to different populations, at times to a remarkable degree. Of course, all peoples make up stories about themselves that bolster their identities and denigrate their enemies, ignoring or suppressing evidence that fails to support those stories. However, a peculiar sensibility began to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century, akin to modern psychoanalysis in its underlying assumption that the most painful aspects of the past had to be brought up for honest scrutiny in order to achieve psychic “health.”

The Soviet dissident and 1970 Nobel Prize in literature winner, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, stated the issue provocatively: “If you desired to change the world, where would you start? With yourself or with others?” Most people in the immediate postwar years preferred to start with others. Nonetheless, it eventually became almost commonplace, at least on the educated left in western Europe and the United States, to assume that a nation must look squarely at the ugly, repressed aspects of the past and recognize guilt, striving to “master” those aspects rather than deny or suppress them.

However, the mass murder of Europe’s Jews did not emerge as a central issue until later in the century, not until after 1989 in areas of the former Soviet Union and Soviet Bloc. It was not just that most Europeans were concerned with immediate problems of survival and reconstruction; reliable information about what would later be called the Holocaust was limited, at least compared to what would be known about it by the end of the century. As we have seen, even the Germans, who decades later came to be held up as models of rigorous self-examination, were initially in denial. The French, while dealing severely with some of the more prominent collaborators in the Vichy regime, were at the same time notably prone to exaggerating the extent of popular French resistance to Nazism and to go easy on relatively minor officials.

One of the goals of the Nuremberg trials had been to give wide publicity to the crimes of the Nazi leadership. Still, what ordinary citizens “should have” known about the mass murder of Jews is not easily determined. It is revealing that Churchill wrote next to nothing about the Holocaust in his six-volume history of the war. De Gaulle’s detailed memoirs, too, largely ignored the topic. However, Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower lamented in April 1945 that “We are told ... the American soldiers [in Europe] do not know what they are fighting for.” Such being the case, Eisenhower commanded that every nearby unit that was not directly engaged in combat be required to tour the recently uncovered horrors at Ohrdruf, a subcamp of Buchenwald (one of the largest concentration camps inside the Nazi Reich). Such a tour, Eisenhower observed, would let his troops “at least know what they are fighting *against*.” He also urged that delegations of newsmen and political officials tour the camps. The local populations, too, were ordered by Eisenhower to experience up close the grotesque sights and smells of the camps.

Eisenhower was accustomed to scenes of carnage, but he and those accompanying him were overwhelmed by the horrors of Ohrdruf. Those standing near the Supreme Commander during a tour of the camp later described him as turning pale, finally reaching a state of cold fury. His comments were likely prompted by widespread reports that American soldiers, especially those who had not experienced front-line combat, were finding the bulk of the German population likable and surprisingly friendly. In leaving Ohrdruf, Eisenhower blurted out to a hapless American sentry, "Still having trouble hating them?"

However intense in 1945, hatred of the Germans by the general population of the United States seemed to diminish remarkably with the Cold War, as West Germany became a valued ally against Communism. The Cold War exercised contrasting and revealing reactions. A number of countries, such as Switzerland, remained neutral. Finland lost territory to the Soviet Union at the end of the war and paid reparations to it but was allowed a curious kind of neutrality, entailing deference to its Soviet neighbor but still remaining outside the Soviet Bloc. Spain's leader, Franco, had accepted aid from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany during Spain's civil war but stayed out of World War II. As the Cold War developed, Franco allowed American military forces to be stationed on Spanish territory. Ireland, with its history of bitter hostility to Britain, also stayed out of World War II. Austria regained its formal unity in 1955, but that unity depended on its avoiding a too-overt show of preference for either bloc. Yugoslavia was a Communist country, but Titoism had become a major heresy by the late 1940s and thus Yugoslavia also ranked among the unallied. However, like Spain, Yugoslavia was courted by the United States as an ally against the Soviet Union. In short, Cold War hostilities, like those of World War II, produced some strange bedfellows.

Most countries in western Europe that allied with the United States in the Cold War remained liberal-democratic or made motions in that direction, if in some cases quite slowly. Portugal, a founding member of NATO, had been formally neutral in World War II; both Portugal and Spain were widely considered fascist, but more accurately could be described as Catholic-authoritarian. Greece and Turkey became NATO members in 1952, though neither were "north Atlantic," nor could they be termed functioning liberal democracies. Moreover, although hostile to the Soviet Union, Greece and Turkey were even more hostile to one another, on the edge of war for many years. (The large island of Cyprus, with its mixed Greek and Turkish population, became another perennial trouble spot, where massive population transfers occurred.)

The Establishment of the Fourth Republic in France

Compared to the extensive changes in the borders in Germany and Poland, the restoration of the borders of countries that had been under Nazi domination in western Europe was relatively simple. Agreement was easily reached that France should be restored to its 1940 borders (including Alsace and Lorraine), but the notion of reestablishing the Third Republic was overwhelmingly rejected. Still, the French public was also chary of proposals to create a republic with a stronger executive branch. The French left still favored a powerful legislative branch, even though it was widely recognized that one of

the Third Republic's most obvious flaws had been the dominance (and pervasive corruption) of its legislative branch.

De Gaulle emerged as the leading statesman in France in 1945, though it turned out that he, like Churchill, was more widely admired as a heroic leader in crisis than as one to be entrusted with the practical tasks of postwar reconstruction. Roosevelt and Churchill at first suspected that De Gaulle had dictatorial ambitions. The French leader in turn harbored resentments over how he had been treated during the war by the Anglo-American leaders (*les anglo-saxons*, as he was inclined to term them). But Roosevelt died in April 1945, and Churchill's Conservative Party was rejected by Britain's voters in June 1945, whereas De Gaulle continued to play a key role throughout 1945 as the head of France's provisional government, during a highly uncertain period for France.

However, after leading the provisional government for six months, De Gaulle suddenly resigned on January 20, 1946, in an ill-conceived effort to pressure France's quarreling political factions, which were at an impasse over the nature of the constitution being considered for the new French republic. He gambled that he would be recalled by popular acclaim and could then push through his own notion of a republic, one with a stronger executive branch. That gamble failed, but the left-leaning constitution that was finally presented to the voters won only 36 percent support, with approximately 31 percent opposed and 31 percent abstaining. De Gaulle campaigned against it, and then retired in disgust to his country estate, to write his memoirs.

De Gaulle would return in 1958, again in a time a crisis, but he had already made a lasting mark in guiding a divided and humiliated populace through perilous straits, as probably no other leader could have done. In his first speech to a liberated Paris, in August 1944, he effectively articulated a glowing vision of the French people as united in their determination to defeat the Nazi enemy and resolved to return to a major role in world affairs – to “glory” (*gloire*), which was a key concept for him; without its binding force, he believed, France would inevitably disintegrate.

De Gaulle and Churchill were both famous for their elegant prose. In De Gaulle's case, that talent was used to spread some useful fictions about how France's population had resisted the German occupation (“except,” as he put it, “for the few unhappy traitors who gave themselves over to the enemy”). He tacitly resisted a severe and sweeping punishment of collaborators, but he approved the death penalty for Pierre Laval, the widely detested prime minister under Pétain. De Gaulle finally commuted Pétain's death sentence to life imprisonment: The head of the Vichy state and revered World War I hero was eighty-nine years old when put on trial, and by that time he was obviously no longer in command of his full mental powers. He would die in prison six years later, in a senile fog.

The parallels between punishing collaborators in France and denazification in Germany are obvious; so many ordinary citizens in both countries had been compromised that draconian measures simply proved impractical. Moreover, the temptations of collaboration in France were greater than in many other countries, in part because the German occupiers were initially less brutal to the French, especially in comparison to the populations on the eastern front. Nonetheless, by the final stages of the war, when the French resistance became more active, the French population had experienced a full share of suffering, both from their Nazi occupiers and from the ravages of war, as Nazi forces were driven out of the country. A large proportion of the country's buildings were destroyed by Anglo-American bombing, and a million families were left

homeless. Some 5 million French prisoners of war and other laborers who had been conscripted to work in Germany were making their way back home.

Even more than Britain, France was by the end of the war a changed country. In both countries there was much talk of revolutionary change, but nothing resulted in either that was even close to the “real socialism” soon to be installed eastern Europe. The British Communist Party won less than 1 percent of the total vote in the June 1945 elections, whereas the French Communist Party (PCF) won 26 percent. A new centrist party in France, the Popular Republican Movement (MRP), won the second largest vote, 24 percent, and the Socialist Party (SFIO) came in third with 22 percent. (The MRP resembled the Christian Democratic parties elsewhere, but with a more secular emphasis, consistent with French political traditions.)

These three parties, all with strong connections to the war-time resistance and all proponents of major political and economic changes, thus initially won three-quarters of the popular vote, which for the first time in French history included women. These parties enjoyed, in short, a significantly larger proportion of the total vote than the Labour Party in Britain had won in June 1945. However, the French parties differed from one another in what turned out to be crucial ways. The large vote won by the PCF reflected the prominent role that Communists had played in the resistance but also the fact that the PCF was not advocating violent social revolution in 1945 and 1946. (The word from Moscow in those two years was for Communist parties to emphasize national recovery and unification, not class conflict or a seizure of power.) The prestige of Communism was much enhanced by the Soviet victory in the Battle of Stalingrad and the drive of the Red Army into Nazi Germany. Nonetheless, many leaders of the SFIO and MRP remained suspicious of Communist long-range intentions.

It soon became obvious that the PCF, SFIO, and MRP could not unite around the kind of coherent program offered by Labour in June 1945, or even agree about the kind of constitution France should have. Nonetheless, the country avoided the chaos that many had predicted. After the initial vigilante excesses at the end of the war, the rule of law was restored and a responsible, reasonably-well-functioning central government established. France’s traumatized society and devastated economy began to assume more normal and productive forms. A vigorous free press emerged, less corrupt than in the past.

One might even argue that France by the late 1940s had become as “socialist” as Britain under Labour Party rule. French state ownership of industrial enterprises was more extensive than in Britain, in part because of steps taken during the French Popular Front period in controlling the aviation and armaments industries. Railroads in France, as elsewhere on the Continent, were in state hands, and key sectors of the French economy came under state control, including prominent banks, insurance companies, and the coal, gas, and electric industries. A social security system was put into place that was more extensive than anything in the French past, and French laborers were tentatively offered a role in plant management. Such steps fell short of the vision of a shining new social republic, *pure et dure* (pure and tough), cherished by resistance leaders, but things certainly might have turned out worse. Within a few decades, France entered a period of unprecedented material wellbeing.

The Fourth Republic lasted only twelve years. Before long it revealed many of the defects of the Third, such as a constant shuffling of cabinet posts and parliamentary deadlocks. As in most of Europe, the postwar unity of Communists, socialists, and

centrists broke up in the spring of 1947. The parties represented in the immediate postwar governments had emerged out of the broad anti-fascist alliance of the war, and for a while many hoped that these broad coalitions would last for an extended period. But that was not to be. The Communists in eastern Europe began by taking over key cabinet posts and then proceeded to absorb or eliminate the other parties. The process in western Europe worked differently. Communists had been included in the initial political alliances of the restored countries, but they were usually denied key cabinet posts, and then were gotten rid of, one way or another, in 1947. The French Communist Party went into opposition in early May 1947, and in France as elsewhere the departure of the Communists meant that viable parliamentary coalitions moved toward the center.

Restoring Liberal Democracy in Italy

The Italian population had lived under Fascist rule longer than any in Europe, and its parliamentary democracy before that had hardly been a model of probity or efficiency, so establishing a liberal-democratic regime after the war was an even larger order than in France. Mussolini had become prime minister in 1922, exercising what he termed totalitarian power by the late 1920s. Italy's king, Victor Emmanuel III, had played an important role in Mussolini's becoming prime minister, and thereafter he offered little resistance to the consolidation of Fascist power. However, he also played a role in bringing Mussolini down. In late July 1943, shortly after Anglo-American forces had landed in Sicily, the king tried to save his throne by breaking with Mussolini and opening negotiations for a separate peace with the Allies. A comparable development in Germany was inconceivable; Hitler had become both president and chancellor. Moreover, until the end of the war, the Führer enjoyed more unquestioning obedience and fanatical popularity than the Duce ever had. By late July 1943, even several of Mussolini's most important lieutenants had concluded that he must be deposed. And so had a majority of the Fascist Council (roughly equivalent to a cabinet). By that time, too, a large part of the Italian population was beginning to regard the Germans as their enemies, the Anglo-Americans as their liberators.

Mussolini was put under arrest but was then freed by the Germans in a daring airborne rescue operation. A new Fascist state, the Italian Social Republic, was established in the north, with Mussolini at its head, while German reinforcements poured into the country. The brutal repressions by the German military of the Italian resistance in the north greatly intensified anti-German feeling in Italy, but the war in Italy continued for two long years, making the damage even greater than in France, indeed greater than any other country on the western front, aside from Germany.

Once the Nazis had been driven from the country, the prospect of a violent left-wing revolution seemed even greater in Italy than in France. Such was the case especially in the north of the country, where the Communists had assumed leadership of many partisan forces and were thus in a strong position to take power, a prospect that was acutely feared by landowners and industrialists in the area. After World War I, in the so-called *biennio rosso*, Italy had also appeared on the edge of social revolution, and by the summer of 1945 the country's revolutionary forces were obviously much stronger than they had been from 1919 to 1921.

However, the Communists held back from launching violent revolution, hoping to preserve the war-time alliance. Perhaps more to the point, Stalin's dictum – that each nation should impose its own system “as far as its army could reach” – held, and American military authorities demanded that the Communist partisans give up their weapons, which they did. The leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Palmiro Togliatti, was fully in accord with the line from Moscow because he anticipated a Communist victory via the ballot box. The PCI did emerge as one of Italy's most popular parties at the end of the war, and, as in Czechoslovakia, many socialists were willing allies of the Communists. In the hotly contested spring elections of 1948, with the Cold War in full swing, the PCI came in second to the Christian Democrats, and it would remain the largest non-ruling Communist party in Europe until the end of the century, regularly winning around a third of the nation's vote and enjoying decisive majorities in a number of northern cities. However, the closest the PCI came to national rule was with Togliatti's appointment as vice-premier in the immediate postwar coalition. He would remain, even after the breakup of that coalition, one of the most respected politicians in Italy, widely considered the most intelligent and least dogmatic of Europe's Communist leaders. The PCI, too, established a record of relatively efficient and uncorrupt operation of local governments, in contrast to the lamentable record of the Christian Democrats in those regards.

The end of the war saw widespread popular violence in Italy. Vigilante-style justice and score-settling resulted in the deaths of perhaps 10,000 Fascists. Hundreds of thousands of serious physical assaults were recorded, including the public humiliation of women tainted by Fascist connections (head-shaving, as in France, was common for women guilty of “horizontal collaboration”). Mussolini was caught, along with his mistress, Claretta Petacci, trying to escape to Switzerland. The two were machine-gunned by partisans, and grisly photos of their bodies hanging upside down were widely disseminated in Italy and abroad.

Publicized trials of Fascist leaders, comparable to those at Nuremberg, were not held, in part because Anglo-American authorities played a different role and in part because the crimes of Italian Fascism were less horrific than those of Nazism. Moreover, events since July 1943 in Italy put anti-Fascist retribution in a different light, since at least some Fascist leaders could legitimately claim that they had been instrumental in overthrowing Mussolini and in rejecting the path Italian Fascism had taken in allying with Nazism. Most Italians by late 1945 needed little prompting to recognize the evils of Nazism, since they themselves had suffered under Nazi rule. Similarly, Italians could claim to have reestablished democratic rule on their own, rather than having it imposed on them, as was the case for the Germans. The Italians' break with their past was yet further emphasized by the results of the constitutional referendum, on July 2, 1946, which abolished the monarchy, replacing it with a liberal-democratic republic. (The West Germans were not given the option of comparable elections until late 1949.) And still another sign of a new democratic age in Italy was that, as in France, women gained the vote.

There had been plans among resistance leaders for a thorough purge of those Fascists remaining in the government and judiciary, but Alcide De Gasperi, the head of the Christian Democratic Party and prime minister throughout the immediate postwar years, effectively sidelined those plans. He feared the divisive effects of such a purge, but no doubt also important in his calculations was the likelihood that getting rid of former Fascists in the government and judiciary would enhance the power of the

revolutionary left and weaken the Christian Democrats. By early 1948, his party was emerging as Italy's most powerful; in the projected April elections, fear of a Communist takeover had become a central issue, and De Gasperi could count on the vote of the propertied as well as the support of the Vatican. The pope openly urged Catholics to vote for the Christian Democrats and threatened excommunication for those who voted Communist. Also of considerable importance was the fact that the leaders of the US government had come to view Italy as a crucial battleground in the emerging Cold War (the Prague coup had occurred in February; the Berlin Blockade would begin in June). American leaders thus went all out in providing support, both overt and covert, to De Gasperi and his party. The Christian Democrats won an absolute majority in the elections, the only such victory of a single party in Italian parliamentary history (in free elections).

De Gasperi was determined that Italy should remain open to American-style free-market capitalism, but, again, in terms of American political discourse, the large role of the state in Italy's economy and society could easily qualify as "socialistic," since De Gasperi's party favored state paternalism and neo-corporatism. There was no wave of postwar nationalizations in Italy comparable to those in Britain and France, and the meagerness of the country's "defascistization" meant that a fair amount of Fascist law was allowed to remain on the books – while former Fascist officials remained to implement or interpret it. The state retained ownership of or extensive influence over a larger part of the economy than in Labour-ruled Britain or Fourth-Republic France. The Italian state also assumed large social-welfare responsibilities: By the late 1950s, only about 60 percent of the substantially rising income of the families of Italian workers was in the form of wages; the rest came from various welfare payments administered by the state.

De Gasperi dominated Italian politics and guided his country away from the revolutionary aspirations of the left, much as Adenauer did in Germany and De Gaulle did in France. However, the new Italian republic was even further from a "pure and tough" ideal than was the new French republic. Under Christian Democratic leadership for most of the rest of the century, Italy seemed to stumble from crisis to crisis. De Gasperi's tenure as prime minister for eight years set a record that was not even closely rivaled after his departure. Decades of parliamentary deadlocks and cabinet musical chairs followed, while corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies persisted. And yet the Italian republic also cannot be termed a failure. Italy eventually prospered economically and instituted important reforms, coming eventually to join the ranks of the world's most affluent nations, especially in its northern regions.

European Unification: The First Steps

De Gasperi played an important role beyond Italy, in that he was prominent among those European leaders who supported plans for European integration. Italians had ample reason to feel disgust for the results of extreme nationalism, and polls in the immediate postwar period showed them more favorable to the notion of European unity than most other Europeans. The British were at this point among the least favorable, but even Churchill spoke positively of "a kind of united states of Europe," in a much-noted

speech in September 1946. But *what* kind of united states of Europe? That was the question, and it would long remain the question. Churchill was thinking of something led by France and Germany, with Britain retaining its separate identity from the Continent. The implicit American model was, moreover, a deceptive one. The citizens of the United States of America spoke a single language; they enjoyed a revered and tested constitution; and they had experienced modern nationalism as a unit rather than as many competing, often hostile nations.

Efforts during the Cold War period to answer the question “what kind of united Europe?” were many, characterized by false starts and bouts of acrimony. The details are complex and the issues often arcane, but the simple truth was that Europeans continued to feel stronger emotional attachments to their long-established national identities than to an emerging and still amorphous European identity. Though most Europeans were unquestionably repelled by the nationalist extremes of the past, they still looked suspiciously at the prospect of major limitations of their national sovereignty in any united states of Europe.

Such being the case, moving cautiously toward economic unity proved the most widely acceptable path. In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community was created. It pulled the economies of Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland, and Luxemburg together by placing their coal and steel industries under the direction of a supra-national agency. This initial step depended to a large extent on the initiative of Robert Schuman, the French foreign minister, and Jean Monnet, the French economic expert who is usually credited with being the main architect of European unification. Schuman worked largely behind the scenes and found support from a number of political leaders, particularly from Christian Democrats such as De Gasperi and Adenauer, but also from Paul-Henri Spaak, the Socialist prime minister of Belgium.

Schuman succinctly stated his main goal: to render war between France and Germany “not only unthinkable but materially impossible.” He was a native of Lorraine and had grown up in two worlds, fluent in both French and German. But he faced resistance and no little hostility; some of his opponents in France referred to him as *le boche* (the Kraut). Still, the Schuman Plan, as it came to be called, was a success. Seven years later it was expanded into the Common Market (or European Economic Community), which entailed a program of gradually lowering all tariff barriers, not just those of coal and steel, between the six member countries, and in other ways coordinating their economic policies. Trade between the six members flourished, and by 1968 all tariff barriers had been abolished. The Common Market came to be a dynamic economic entity comparable in size to that of the United States and in fact exceeding it in per capital productivity. A West German national, Walter Hallstein, became its first president. He not only hailed its economic success but also put special emphasis on the longer-range political aspirations contained its initial charter, the Treaty of Rome.

However, Hallstein and others who saw the Common Market as a solid foundation for a politically united Europe misjudged the complexity of the task and the stubbornness of resistance to it. The Cold War had also worked to encourage European unification, but it did so in ways that many found unsettling, particularly in regard to the German Question: West Germany’s full membership in NATO – less than a decade after Nazi Germany’s surrender – took some getting used to for those who had suffered under Nazi

tyranny. Nonetheless, fear of Communist expansion, complemented by steady pressure from the United States, prevailed. The prosperity that emerged from economic cooperation with Germany also tended to smooth over lingering anxieties.

De Gaulle's Vision: The Fifth Republic

A declining apprehension about Germany, however, did not mean a concurrent acceptance of the notion of supra-national political institutions. In that regard, De Gaulle, who returned to power in France in 1958, again became a major player. Some have even termed the 1960s in Europe "the decade of De Gaulle." The sovereign nation-state for him remained central, abandoning it wholly unacceptable; the only satisfactory kind of European unification was one that retained separate sovereign states, "a Europe of fatherlands" (*Europe des patries*)—led by France, of course. He favored Franco-German reconciliation but continued to nurse resentments and apprehensions in regard to *les anglo-saxons*. He twice vetoed the notion of a British entry into the Common Market, in 1963 and 1967, primarily because Britain could be expected to challenge French leadership in ways that West Germany would not. At any rate, De Gaulle believed that the "special relationship" of Britain and the United States was inconsistent with the kind of separate European identity and future world role, standing between the two superpowers, that he favored for the countries of the Common Market.

The most immediate cause of De Gaulle's return to power was the worsening war in Algeria, now in its seventh year. Bringing it to an end was a task that would require supreme political agility and no little duplicity, since the army and the European colonists in Algeria were led to believe that De Gaulle would support them and *Algérie française*, keeping Algeria part of France. Again he played a role that no other conceivable leader could have in averting civil war, though several attempts on his life were made. He moved toward negotiations for a peace settlement and oversaw the demise of the Fourth Republic. The constitution of the new Fifth Republic included the strong executive branch that he had earlier insisted was necessary. The new constitution won overwhelming support in a popular referendum in October 1958.

France now had a stable government. The partisan turmoil and constant cabinet changes of the Fourth Republic were at an end, and many neglected tasks could be effectively addressed without running into parliamentary obstruction. Contrary to the predictions of some, the Fifth Republic did not become a dictatorship; De Gaulle respected civil liberties and tolerated criticism, but the power of France's political parties was significantly curtailed, while non-elected technical experts assumed a larger role than before in the running of the country. France became what some referred to as a plebiscitary democracy, though, unlike the last such democracy in France, under Napoleon III, it proved longer-lasting and more effective. Formally, De Gaulle became the president of the republic, but no political term quite fit him at this point. His critics mocked him as a Louis XIV would-be, a modern sun king. No doubt there was something monarchical about him and his rule, but he was also popular, highly intelligent, and respectful of liberal-democratic niceties.

By 1962, a peace treaty had been signed with the Algerian rebels, finally putting an end to an exhausting and brutal war. The French could direct greater concentration to

other concerns, prominent among them economic development. France became the world's fifth economic power in the 1960s, trailing only West Germany in western Europe. De Gaulle could also concentrate on his vision of "glory" for France, a major component of which came down to challenging American hegemony. His challenge operated on many levels, most of them popular with the French public across the political spectrum.

The command structure of NATO constituted, in De Gaulle's eyes, an unacceptable limitation of France's military independence and thus its national sovereignty, since it placed supreme command in the hands of a foreign general (Eisenhower at first). De Gaulle removed French units from NATO command, and NATO's command post was moved from Paris to Brussels. He criticized American intervention in Vietnam and shifted France's stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict to one more critical of the Israelis. He made independent efforts to deal with the Soviet Union, and he took steps toward establishing independent atomic weapons for France.

It would not be justified, however, to describe De Gaulle as fundamentally anti-American (or antisemitic in any rigorous sense, in spite of a notorious reference to Jews he made in criticizing the Israelis, after the Six-Day War – as an overconfident, elitist, and domineering people). The subtleties of his thought defy summary, but he retained a fundamentally realist concept of international relations, which meant that sovereign countries necessarily pursued interests rationally and coldly, not letting emotions or sentiments rule. And he believed it was in France's national interest to resist and distance itself from American power.

Any number of related issues also came into play. De Gaulle expressed alarm at the invasion of American investments and products into Europe – to say nothing of the English language's "invasion" of French. He did not hide his aversion to modern American mass culture. But such attitudes, while often angering Americans, were hardly unusual; pro- and anti-American sentiments in France had long vied with one another, as had pro- and anti-French sentiments in the United States. In early 1961, when recently elected president John F. Kennedy visited France, accompanied by his wife, Jacqueline (who was of French origin and could speak the language); the couple seemed to win a genuine affection from the French public. This young Irish-American, the country's first Catholic president, did not quite qualify as an Anglo-Saxon, but he still represented an assertive American power, something De Gaulle could hardly ignore. However, a Kennedy-led United States was obviously not an enemy comparable to the Soviet Union. In private conversations De Gaulle gave friendly warnings to Kennedy of the dangers of becoming involved in Vietnam, and, when the Cuban Missile Crisis later arose, De Gaulle spoke publicly in support of the United States. (However, he was also perturbed that, in a crisis that threatened to pull Europe into an atomic exchange, the French had little or no voice.)

It cannot be concluded that De Gaulle achieved his goals, in no small part because his essential West-German partner balked. In the autumn of 1963, Adenauer had been replaced by an even more pro-American and pro-NATO, chancellor, Ludwig Erhard. Yet De Gaulle certainly helped to diminish American influence and prestige in Europe (an inevitable development, really), which then indirectly contributed to the growing confidence of Europeans in moving toward unity and independence from American power, a major theme of the next chapter.

Further Reading

Key aspects of the end of European imperialism are dealt with in two excellent if very different works: John E. Talbott's *The War Without a Name: France in Algeria, 1954–62* (1980) and Stephen Humphreys's *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (2005).

Charles Williams's *The Last Great Frenchman: A Life of General De Gaulle* (1997) is another biography that provides an attractive introduction to a general period, as well as to a towering, difficult personality.

Robert H. Abzug's *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (1985) provides a gripping account of initial reactions, in the United States but also in Europe, to news of the liberated camps.

25 | Europe in a New Generation

The years 1968 to 1989 mark a period from the last major flare-up of the revolutionary mystique in Europe to the eve of the disintegration of Communist rule in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Chapter 22, Chapter 23, and Chapter 24 dealt with Europe's recovery from World War II and with the opening decades of the Cold War; this chapter, Chapter 26, and Chapter 27, address developments that, while still having obvious roots in the war, were in significant ways different, reflecting the fact that a new generation, born after the war, was coming into adulthood. Also marking a distinct difference from the previous period of rapid economic growth, economic difficulties proliferated in the 1970s and 1980s. Leadership in both capitalist and Communist countries came under a renewed scrutiny, one that produced political adjustments in western Europe but ultimately the demise of Communist rule itself in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Generational conflict, as we have seen, is a constant factor in modern history, but it assumed a peculiar and explicit sharpness with the youthful rebellion of the late 1960s. Both the revolt of youth and the efflorescence of feminism had plausible connections to a conflict of generations, itself related to the trauma of war and the death of so many millions, especially of young men, between 1939 and 1945. Obviously other factors also came into play, and in fact the numbers of men killed in war in each country did not closely correlate with the extent of youthful rebellion and feminist activism after 1968; each country's expression of them differed according to national peculiarities.

Communism with a Human Face: Czechoslovakia, 1968

In the decades immediately following the war, as we have seen, the moderate to conservative Christian Democrats played a key role in most Continental democracies. Those decades, while impressively dynamic in economic terms and hardly without their own political excitements and crises, were nonetheless ones of caution and convention in other regards, to the point of appearing stolid and tedious in the eyes of the generation coming of age in the late 1960s. The left was by no means immune to the resentment of youth: In nearly every country by the 1970s and 1980s, the average age of the leaders of democratic-socialist and Communist parties had risen. Party and trade-union bureaucracies had grown in size, while rank-and-file memberships tended to stagnate or decline. The aging of the leaders in the Soviet Union became especially apparent, to the extent that the country was widely termed a “gerontocracy” (rule by the old). The energy and idealism of the past were everywhere less in evidence. The upper cadres of western Europe’s governments, too, tended to remain in the hands of moderate-to-conservative older men who had taken up positions of responsibility at war’s end or even before. There was then a paradoxical kinship in the youthful rebellion of the late 1960s and the militantly antisocialist rule of Margaret Thatcher in Britain in the 1980s. Although they stood at opposite ends of the political spectrum in most regards, both aggressively attacked bureaucracies and sought to overturn stolid and established ways of doing things.

The year 1968, like 1848, has gone down in European history as one of continent-wide revolution, in both cases with initially unbounded hopes that were followed by disappointments and a rightward swing. In the spring of 1968, developments in two rather different countries, Czechoslovakia and France, attracted worldwide attention. Czechoslovakia’s history, as we have seen, had a number of intriguingly atypical aspects, both before and after the war. In 1946 its Communist Party won 38 percent of the vote in free elections, and a Communist-led left-wing coalition took office in May of that year. But the predicted democratic evolution toward Communism failed to occur, and in February 1948 Communists forced their non-Communist allies from positions of power. By late 1949, Czechoslovakia had become thoroughly “Stalinized.”

Still, the Czech areas of the country remained closer to western norms in literacy, economic productivity, and middle-class composition than did most other areas of the Soviet Bloc. Beginning in early 1968, the question again arose of whether a more democratic form of Communist rule was possible in Czechoslovakia. The man who personified the “Prague Spring,” Alexander Dubček, assumed power in January. He introduced a series of reforms that allowed for greater popular participation in government, decentralization of power, and intellectual freedom, moving toward what he famously termed “Communism with a human face.”

Dubček came to power in a typically complex party shuffle but still based on decisions made by party leaders rather than in direct response to pressure from below. But then the nature of his growing popularity, especially with students and intelligentsia, began to worry Soviet leaders and Communist Party officials in neighboring Eastern Bloc countries, who feared that their own populations might begin to ask for comparable reforms and freedoms. In contrast, many western-European Communists became enthusiastic supporters of Dubček’s reforms, citing them as confirmation of the argument that Communist parties could gain power legally and then rule with the

support of a majority. This general perspective became known as “Eurocommunism,” suggesting a continued identification with Communist ideals but reservations about Bolshevik and Soviet Bloc models of gaining and retaining power.

It is tempting to describe Dubček as giving new life to the Communist revolutionary mystique. He was, however, a curious man for such a role. He lacked the charisma of a Trotsky and the unshakable self-assurance of a Lenin – as well as the ruthlessness of both. He came across as a decent if also rather ordinary man, with few of the traits that might have been expected in someone who had grown up in the Soviet Union and had then worked his way up the party bureaucracy, somehow surviving periods of Stalinism, de-Stalinization, and neo-Stalinism without losing his own attachment to Communist ideals. His personal background was unusual for an eastern-European Communist leader: He was born in Slovakia to parents who had returned to their homeland after spending years in the United States. In 1924, when he was three years old, his parents again moved, this time to the Soviet Union, where he was raised, until he returned to Slovakia in 1938.

Soviet leaders after Khrushchev tended to be staid managers, not idealists, and they did not know what to make of this modest Slovak. After various futile efforts to contain him and his supporters bureaucratically, Soviet leaders decided on raw force: Soviet and Warsaw Pact (composed of eight Soviet Bloc nations) troops suddenly rolled into the country in late August 1968. Unlike the Hungarians in 1956, the bewildered Czechoslovak population offered only passive resistance. Firm Soviet control was imposed on the country, and it remained occupied militarily until the collapse of the Soviet empire in the early 1990s. Dubček was harshly disciplined and ultimately removed from power in early 1969, replaced by more pliant leaders. The Brezhnev Doctrine was soon proclaimed, after the most prominent figure in the Soviet leadership by this time, Leonid Brezhnev, stating that whenever “forces hostile to socialism” tried to take over in a socialist (Communist) country, it would become “a concern of all socialist [Communist] countries.”

Observers noted similarities to the Truman Doctrine of March 1947 (proclaimed in support of the royalists in Greece against Communist forces there). However apt the comparison, the Brezhnev Doctrine marked a more blatant assertion of Soviet control in eastern Europe and a more explicit limitation of national sovereignty or popular rule in any Communist country. The logic of the Brezhnev Doctrine could be termed Leninist (the party rules, not the masses), but the long-term consequences can hardly be termed favorable to the prestige of Soviet Communism in Europe. That prestige, already diminished by the Sino-Soviet Conflict, the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and the Berlin Wall, fell to new depths. The overwhelming majority of the Communist parties of Europe and the world criticized the August invasion. Even Jean-Paul Sartre, the famous French existentialist writer, normally a stubborn defender of the Soviet side in the Cold War, denounced the invasion as “pure aggression,” and “a war crime.” Soviet leaders succeeded in repressing what they perceived as a major threat, but relations within the Soviet Bloc would never be the same.

Young Rebels in Western Europe

The concurrent unrest in western Europe in early 1968 differed from that in Czechoslovakia in some crucial regards. The goals of the young rebels of 1968 in western Europe were more diffuse than those of Dubček and his supporters, whereas the

western rebels faced opponents in power who were more tolerant and respectful of liberal-democratic norms. Even when bureaucratically entrenched, leaders in Western democracies were not as detested, or feared, as much as their counterparts in Communist-ruled countries. It speaks of a different environment in western Europe that Communist Party leaders there, especially in France, had little sympathy for the student rebels. Communist officials were the object of student-rebel derision ("Stalinist creeps" was a favored epithet) as much as were those in leading posts of government and education.

The Western rebels of 1968 claimed a range of intellectual sources but were self-consciously less interested in theory than revolutionaries of the European past had been. Insofar as there was a connection with the revolutionary mystique, it was more with its sprawling anarchist wing than with Marxism or Leninism. Rather than "all power to the soviets!," the student rebels were known for the slogan "all power to the imagination!" and for their hostility to authority of all sorts. One of the most often cited intellectual influences on the youthful rebels in Europe (as well as in the United States) was the German-born thinker Herbert Marcuse. As a twenty-year-old, he had participated in the abortive Spartacus Uprising in January 1919, and in the 1920s he became known as one of many Marxist theoreticians in Germany. But he fled Germany when the Nazis took over (because of both his Jewish origin and his Marxist beliefs), ultimately ending up as an academic in the United States. One of the best-known of his books was *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), in which he offered a sweeping critique of modern industrial society, arguing that the proletariat had been won over to bourgeois consumerism and could no longer be considered a vehicle for progress. Instead, Marcuse argued that newly important and alienated groups, including ethnic minorities and youth, would have to take up the task of destroying the "one-dimensional" societies that had emerged in Europe and America.

Whether many student rebels actually read (or understood) Marcuse's often demanding writings can be doubted, but he nonetheless spoke to an emerging mood of diffuse dissatisfaction with the fruits of postwar capitalism. An underlying issue of 1968 was the clash of different sensibilities, linked to the radically different experiences of generations. More suggestive of the mood of the time than the Germanic, post-Marxist abstractions of Marcuse was the enormous popularity, throughout Europe, even in the Soviet Union, of the British rock band The Beatles. The lyrics "We're the young generation, and we got something to say!" of the Monkees, an American imitation of the Beatles, made the conflict of generations quite explicit, as did many other figures in popular entertainment.

What exactly *did* the young generation have to say? The lack of realism in Dubček's expectations became all too obvious, but his program of Communism with a human face was nonetheless relatively tangible, linked to concrete measures, in ways that the demands of youthful rebels in western Europe were not. For such reasons Dubček and other reformers in the Soviet Bloc have been the object of sympathetic analysis more often than have the student radicals – whose actions have been dismissed by many critics as little more than the tantrums of a spoiled generation, one capable of catchy slogans and self-dramatizing theatrics but that lacked fundamental seriousness, intellectual rigor, and practical follow-through.

Population "bulges" and conflicts between generations can work themselves out in many ways. When a bulge is composed of young people, as with the large numbers born

in the immediate postwar years, the likelihood of unrest in a given society is great, even if the focus of the unrest is uncertain. Youthful energies might be directed at overthrowing tyranny, but they also have the potential to move in hugely destructive directions, as with the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. When the members of a population bulge grow older, the results, again, might be positive, given the relatively greater number of workers in their most productive stages of life. However, the economy needs to have developed institutions capable of tapping these workers' potential productivity (as many economies have not). Eventually productive workers become elderly and relatively unproductive as retirees, putting a special burden on the rest of the population. If ever there is a need for long-range planning by government authorities, it is to deal with population bulges. However, the task requires considerable political finesse; the necessary decisions are likely to be unpopular and thus difficult to put into effect. Few states have done it perfectly, or even well.

France: The “Events of May”

To note the ephemeral enthusiasms of youth is not to suggest that legitimate cause for dissatisfaction was lacking in the late 1960s, particularly in the unresponsive bureaucracies and inadequate facilities that young people encountered in institutions of higher education. The Vietnam War worked as a powerful intensifier for young people, especially for young men eligible to be drafted in the United States, but even in Europe that war was widely seen by young people as a senseless conflict, supported by an older, blinkered generation, beholden to the United States. In France, from the early 1950s to the late 1960s the numbers of students enrolled in universities more than tripled, without a corresponding expansion of libraries, classrooms, and course offerings. Student frustration and anger were to be expected. What was not expected was the extent to which their protests and disruptions, especially in Paris, caught fire with the rest of the population, at least for a while. As in 1848, poor decisions by those in authority, linked to overreactions by the forces of order (including out-of-control beatings of student protesters by police), sparked indignation from other parts of society. Known in France as “the events of May,” they were remarkable if also a bit strange – not a revolution but much resembling the opening stages of revolutions in the past. A general strike was declared on May 13, 1968, and within a short time some 10 million workers were on strike, exceeding in numbers any general strike in French history.

Successful revolutions, as we have seen, are often the result of the failure of existing political leadership rather than broad popular support for a radical revolutionary program; the Bolsheviks were able to take over only after the tsar and other contenders for power had shown themselves unable to rule. However, the French Communist Party in 1968 little resembled the Bolshevik Party of November 1917. More to the point, President Charles De Gaulle little resembled the weak Tsar Nicholas II or the vacillating Alexander Kerensky, while the students, their sympathizers, and the millions of strikers recognized no single leader, organization, or program.

Such being the case, a policy of divide and conquer was quite effective. Striking workers were pacified with wage increases, whereas the initial sympathy for student protesters proved ephemeral. Conservatives and moderates feared a descent into

anarchy or possibly a new Popular Front government of socialists and Communists. De Gaulle called for elections, and in them his party won its greatest victory, giving him a solid majority in the Chamber of Deputies. De Gaulle's famous retort, when meeting student protesters, had its own kind of symbolism: A dignified and revered military hero in his late seventies, facing down raucous, long-haired rebels in their teens and twenties, De Gaulle declared, "Reform, yes. Carnival, no!" (The untranslatable French term he used for "carnival," *chie-en-lit*, which suggests a chaotic celebration, translates literally as "crap in bed," as a naughty child might do.) A reply heard from the ever-rakish student protesters was "*Reforme, non! Chie-en-lit, oui!*"

Student protests over university conditions in Italy had already begun in 1967 and would reach a violent climax in the summer of 1969. In Germany and many other countries, too, students clashed with authorities over a number of issues, but nowhere by the early 1970s was it possible to speak of anything approximating a substantial victory for student rebels, if for no other reason than "victory" for most of them had no coherent definition. The frustrations of those who believed in the necessity of immediate radical change soon found expression in terrorism, especially in Italy and Germany, again recalling the trends in the anarchist movement of the late nineteenth century. But such violent action further repelled the great majority of the population; it seemed to represent a nihilistic, adolescent rejection of authority more than any genuine belief that radical change would emerge from terrorist actions.

Feminism in the New Generation

Previous chapters have traced the slow progress and paradoxical ups and downs of the Woman Question throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the late 1960s on, a quantum leap in feminist thought and action took place. As noted in Chapter 4, feminism was a peculiarism in the ways that it combined and yet also challenged the majorisms of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the Enlightened goals of equality and justice for women had proved especially elusive, in part because of the difficulty of agreeing on what equality, justice, and liberation for women came down to over a broad range of practical applications.

By the eve of the twentieth century, growing numbers of males, both on the right and on the left, had been won over to extending the vote to women, in the case of conservative males ostensibly because of evidence that women could be expected to vote conservatively. For such reasons, the Christian Democrats and Gaullists supported giving women the vote after World War II. And women in most countries did vote disproportionately for Christian Democrats, Gaullists, and other conservatives or authority figures in the immediate postwar elections. Comparable conservative calculations had earlier operated in terms of giving the vote to lower-class men: Napoleon III, Disraeli, Bismarck, and Hindenburg all proved popular with a large percentage of the poor and lower-middle class.

However, conservative males (and most males to a degree) continued to be wary of feminist agendas insofar as they looked to an expansion of equal status beyond the vote – in the home, in the workplace, in education, in legal relations, and in sexual matters. The first discussions of the Woman Question in the nineteenth century tended to focus on

education, civil equality, and gaining the vote; issues of reproductive rights and equal pay came cautiously to the fore a bit later, but, again, it was obvious that, of all the questions that emerged in the early nineteenth century, the Woman Question was potentially the most protean and far-reaching in implications: It dealt, after all, with sensitive, deeply rooted issues of identity – and with liberating half of humanity from oppression by the other half. It also reflected generational issues between women. A familiar remark by feminist activists at this time was that they wanted to be as different from their mothers as possible – or that they were determined to reject the subordination and compromises forced upon their mothers.

In the interwar years, in areas where Fascist, Nazi, or other authoritarian regimes came into power (a large part of Europe eventually), the slow progress made in recognizing women's rights seemed to be halted if not reversed. During the war and in the first postwar decades, women in many areas of Europe were necessarily more concerned with simple survival than with gender equality. But, by the late 1960s, the general mood of liberation seemed patently favorable to wider feminist aspirations. However, women among the young rebels were repeatedly disappointed if not shocked by the attitudes they encountered in young male rebels: Those who so passionately denounced the oppression and irrationality of existing authoritarian structures nonetheless often retained blatant male supremacist attitudes (“male chauvinist” became the epithet of choice, followed later by “testosterone-poisoned”).

For many women, “consciousness-raising” experiences multiplied; conditions and attitudes previously tolerated became much less bearable. In France, already in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (The Second Sex) had offered a provocative analysis of male supremacist attitudes, one that feminists of the 1970s and 1980s would recognize as a founding text, though by then it had been joined by a voluminous and diverse output from other feminist authors. Among the most influential in Europe, as in America, were the writings of the American Betty Friedan (e.g., *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963).

De Beauvoir was a woman of extraordinary intellectual abilities, physical beauty, and fierce independence. As a teenager she had been an ardent Catholic, declaring her intention to become a nun (although her father, in awe of his precocious daughter, exclaimed that “she thinks like a man!”). She went on to win many academic distinctions, in the process abandoning her Catholic faith, embracing existentialism, and carrying on a number of love affairs, with both men and women, most famously with Jean-Paul Sartre. Marcuse and de Beauvoir tapped many of the same sources in German thought, but it is unlikely that many among the millions who rallied to feminist banners by the 1980s did so because of having read *The Second Sex*, any more than most student radicals carefully read or understood Marcuse's work. De Beauvoir became much better known through her novels, especially her best-selling *Les Mandarins* (The Mandarins, 1954), a classic roman à clef (a novel with fictional characters that have transparent equivalents in real life) that explored not only radical feminist perspectives but also much else in the contemporary French scene. For some time, de Beauvoir's intellectual partnership and unconventional love life with Sartre achieved the kind of fame usually limited to movie stars. The British author Doris Lessing, another woman whose novels explored feminist perspectives (e.g., *The Golden Notebook*, 1962), also eventually achieved great fame, winning the Nobel Prize in literature in 2007. But, to repeat, these were only a few in a remarkable outpouring of feminist thought and action.

By the 1970s, much had already changed for women in Europe, although there continued to be great variety in their material conditions and the institutions under which they lived. The situation in the Communist world differed markedly from that in the capitalist West, as did conditions in southern Europe compared to northern Europe. Women in the Soviet Union had long enjoyed formal equality under the law and in the workplace. In the postwar period the medical profession became around three-quarters female in the Soviet Union, but much of the unskilled labor force that attended to such matters as street sweeping and garbage collecting was also female. Whatever the role of Communist ideology, the stark reality in the Soviet Union was that so many millions of men had perished or become incapacitated by the war that it was inevitable that women would take up roles previously dominated by men. Nonetheless, women in the Soviet Union continued to have primary if not exclusive responsibility for child care and household chores, as was the case also in most eastern-European countries.

The issue of sex roles in the domestic realm (whether men would prepare meals, clean bathrooms, or change diapers) did not become a matter of serious discussion until the 1980s, and then only in the United States and northern Europe. Whatever the country, the ideal of sharing domestic tasks and child-rearing with complete equality, especially when both spouses had full-time jobs, did not come to widespread consideration until the twenty-first century. Women entered the workforce in ever greater numbers, but establishing norms that guaranteed them equal pay for equal work met much resistance, and many prestigious occupations remained overwhelmingly male. Issues of sexual harassment also remained largely hidden.

Among the many material changes for women by the 1960s was a rise in life expectancy, especially in western Europe, where by the 1980s women lived on average five years longer than men, and even longer than that in the Soviet Union. Women came to have greater access to higher education than ever before, while bearing fewer children, in part because birth control had become more available. Longer lives and fewer children meant that women of European origin had more free time, especially as they entered their middle years. A long-range trend emerged for smaller families and for later and fewer formal marriages. More women came to live alone or serve as the single head of the family. Such developments inevitably offered women more freedom and control over their lives, or reflected what happened – with the rising divorce rate – when they sought to exercise that freedom and control.

Like many “progressive” changes in history, liberating women had its share of paradoxical and unintended consequences. One such consequence was that the birth rates of most established European populations dropped below replacement levels by the 1970s, while most non-European immigrants, ever-increasing in numbers and with very high birth rates, came from cultures where female subordination was more strict than it had been even in traditional European culture – indeed, more than under Fascism and Nazism. Thus, in the area of gender relations as well as much else, demographic realities posed new, often unexpected, problems for the European future.

Feminism, for all its achievements in these decades, or perhaps because of its complexity and its contradictory and fractious tendencies, never became an organized mass movement in the way that, say, working-class movements had. From the early nineteenth century, those concerned with the Woman Question shared a general

conviction that the injustices women faced should be remedied, but their differences in regard to methods and ultimate goals remained, or even grew in importance, complexity, and paradoxical aspects.

The results of gaining the vote in Europe proved disappointing for many feminists. While female suffrage still appeared an obvious first step, it became clear that many steps beyond political action were necessary. A fundamental division of feminist thought, long implicit, came increasingly to the fore by the late twentieth century: Those known as “gender feminists” concluded that essential or unchangeable differences between masculine and feminine identities actually did exist, beyond those obviously produced by culture. The “equity feminists” denied or minimized the differences and thus entertained larger hopes for cooperative and harmonious gender relations in the future, working in cooperation with men who recognized the justice of the feminist cause.

Gender feminists were less optimistic, inclined to see male–female relationships as irreparably fraught with tension, even tragically so, and they paid particular attention to the destructive impact on women of the differences between the sexes. Germaine Greer, whose book *The Female Eunuch* (1970) became an international best-seller, was a leading proponent of gender feminism, whereas Friedan forwarded equity feminism (especially in her best-selling book *The Second Stage*, 1981), but there were very many nuances and mixtures in between. Discoveries about the operation of the brain and the role of hormones in sexual identity, if often of dubious scientific rigor, added fuel to the controversies about the role of culture vs. inherent attributes. Perhaps what was most interesting was the discussion of how environment and genetic factors subtly worked on each other, in ways not previously understood and still to be explored by scientists.

What must rank as one of the most unanticipated political developments in these decades was that the first woman to become a British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, was a hard-line Conservative. She had worked her way up through the ranks of the Conservative Party and, as prime minister from 1979 through the 1980s, led an aggressive campaign against what Conservatives by this time were deriding as the “the nanny state” – the state constructed by the Labour Party and for a long time at least partly accepted by the Conservative Party. In the nineteenth century, the liberal left and some socialists were convinced that, once women gained the vote, the state would become more caring and cooperative, reflecting feminine values (or those of a “nanny”), unlike the states of the day, ruled by aggressive masculine individualists.

John Stuart Mill had similarly predicted that, once women came to political power, they would guide their countries away from reckless military adventures and toward international reconciliation. Ironically, the war against Argentina that Thatcher launched in the spring of 1982, formally over ownership of the Falkland Islands – but more deeply over national prestige – not only enhanced her popularity but also proved crucial to her survival in power, after a decidedly unpromising start. Similarly, Thatcher’s hard-line position in regard to the Soviet Union, in support of American President Ronald Reagan, prompted Gorbachev to term her “the iron lady.” Thatcher did not identify herself as a feminist, and most feminists were loath to recognize her as one of theirs, but she certainly undermined facile assumptions about women in politics. Though not a typical woman – politicians are rarely typical people – she could be seen

as validating an important element of the feminist ideal, in that she was an independent, eminently capable, and supremely self-confident person.

“Becoming visible,” a slogan associated with the feminist movement, had been achieved by European women as never before by the last decade of the twentieth century, and Thatcher, however paradoxically, contributed to that visibility. Still, the representation of women continued to vary widely from country to country and arena to arena. It remained the case, for example, that only a tiny percentage of parliamentary seats and leadership posts in Europe’s political parties and trade unions were held by women. It would also be the case that moderate-to-conservative women rose to prominent political positions more notably than left-wing, explicitly feminist women did. Angela Merkel, a Christian Democrat and moderate conservative, became Germany’s first woman chancellor in 2005. She was also the first woman after Thatcher to become the leader of a major European country. Ségolène Royal, the French Socialist Party’s candidate in the 2007 French presidential election, lost to Nicolas Sarkozy, although she remained a major figure in the Socialist Party, vowing to run again. Ironically, however, it was her long-time companion (from whom she had recently separated), François Hollande, who became the Socialist candidate for president in the elections of spring 2012 – and who defeated Sarkozy, opening new directions for the country in a time of economic crisis and multiple other challenges.

Further Reading

Two works mentioned in the Further Reading sections of Chapter 22 and Chapter 24 are especially relevant to this chapter: William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945–2002* (2004) and Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (2006).

However, the literature dealing with Europe from 1968 to 1989 is vast. The following books stand out (though many others equally good could be cited): Renate Bridenthal et al., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (1997); Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (1997); Carole Fink et al., eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (1998); Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present* (1999); David Childs, *The Two Red Flags: European Social Democracy and Soviet Communism since 1945* (2000); and Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2004).

26 Détente, Ostpolitik, Glasnost

A New Europe

The Cold War, as it took shape from the late 1940s through the 1960s, had been largely “bipolar,” involving a series of sometimes dramatic confrontations between the United States and the Soviet Union, although after Stalin’s death there was talk, off and on, of peaceful coexistence. The repression of “Communism with a human face” in Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 served to worsen east–west relations in the short run, but the 1970s have generally been considered a decade of détente, marked by German Chancellor Willy Brandt’s conciliatory initiatives and the Soviet signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975 (emphasizing human rights and a commitment to the peaceful resolution of international conflict).

Still, that decade was hardly one of uninterrupted harmony between the United States and the Soviet Union; tensions between them worsened abruptly during the presidency of Jimmy Carter (1977–81) and further worsened, at first, when Ronald Reagan became president (1981–9). Both Carter and Reagan moved away from President Richard Nixon’s amoral “realism,” and exerted moralistic or Wilsonian pressures on Soviet leaders, especially over issues of human rights and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Reagan’s initial hard line softened, rather unexpectedly and in opposition to the advice of many of his advisers, to a willingness to compromise with Communist leaders. That willingness was more acceptable to the American side insofar as the weakness of the Soviet side had become ever more obvious by the mid-1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev assumed its leadership. He, too, was willing to compromise, and he instituted fundamental changes in the way the Soviet Union was ruled. But his reforms proved inadequate to preserve Communist leadership of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc. The year 1991 saw the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union; after that year, new leaders arose and new directions were taken inside the former

European Communist world and, less dramatically, in the rest of Europe, especially with the formation (also in 1991) and expansion of the European Union, ultimately to include many countries of the former Soviet Bloc.

Shifting International Relationships: Frictions and Contretemps in the Soviet Union and United States

The treatment of Soviet Jews became an especially contentious issue by the late 1970s. Soviet Jews who were refused exit visas were now described as “prisoners of Zion” or became lionized as “refuseniks.” The Jewish Question in the Soviet Union became so important at this point mostly because Communist rule was incompatible with the clauses having to do with human rights and popular rule as defined in the Helsinki Accords (which included the right to emigrate). Soviet leaders had no intention of respecting the Accords in that regard, but those Accords became a tool used by dissidents in nearly all Communist-ruled countries to expose and embarrass Communist leaders.

Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, to bolster a nascent pro-Soviet regime there, gradually turned into the Soviet Union’s version of the American intervention in Vietnam, undermining the Soviet economy and dividing its population. The Soviet intervention was bitterly denounced by Carter, who took retaliatory measures, among the most resented of which was the withdrawal of American athletes from participation in the Moscow summer Olympics in 1980 (the Soviets retaliated by boycotting the summer 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles). Reagan later upped the ante, denouncing the Soviet Union as “the evil empire.” He took even more substantial measures than Carter had to aid the anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and he initiated a massive expansion of the United States’ military expenditure. Reagan and his advisers calculated, not without reason, that the expenditures involved in Afghanistan would exacerbate the weakness of the Soviet Union’s economy.

For the United States, the 1970s were the most internally troubled decade since the 1930s. Nixon’s first term as president (1969–73) was followed by his landslide victory in the elections of November 1972, but his second term ended with his humiliating impeachment and resignation in August 1974. The Vietnam War was finally brought to a muddled, humiliating end in 1973. Nixon’s demise and the scandals associated with his presidency not only weakened American self-esteem but further fueled a worldwide decline in American prestige. Carter’s presidency, too, had been marred by acrimony and national humiliation in the Iran hostage crisis (November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981), especially after the failure of a daring military effort to rescue the hostages.

Even though the American economy was far stronger than that of the Soviet Union, the Vietnam War seriously affected it too; the “guns and butter” promised by President Lyndon Johnson (1963–9) simply could not be provided in equal measure. The rapid economic growth of the immediate postwar decades in both Europe and the United States had in fact begun to show fault lines by the late 1960s, but their economies suffered an additional jolt with the Arab-led oil embargo of 1973. Here too there was a strong link between the Jewish Question and major developments in Europe and the rest of the world.

The Impact of the Oil Embargo of 1973: “Stagflation”

As noted above, the Arab–Israeli conflict remained unresolved, and in some regards it had worsened after the war of 1948. The Yom Kippur War of October 1973 was launched by Egypt and Syria in part to regain control over the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights (lost in the Six-Day War of 1967), but in a broader sense that war, as the others, reflected the continued refusal of the leaders of virtually all Arab states to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state in their midst. However, Israel’s aspirations to expand the borders established in 1948 remained ill-defined and the cause of increasing suspicion in following years, since the Israelis undoubtedly hoped to expand and consolidate but differed among themselves about how much.

Again, the Arab states in 1973 proved unable to translate their huge population advantage into a military victory. But they had another potent weapon in their control of oil resources, and they now used it effectively, operating through OPEC (Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries) to punish those states that had aided Israel in the war, most prominently the United States, by placing an oil embargo on them. The price of oil worldwide by the end of the 1970s was close to ten times that of 1973. The implications were ominous: The price of a commodity essential to modern industrial production – and one that most European nations lacked – rose with a suddenness never before experienced, with a ripple effect on all economies that depended on OPEC oil.

The skyrocketing price of oil was accompanied by a new phenomenon and a new word: “stagflation,” the coexistence of economic stagnation (or depression) and inflation. Economists and political leaders had considered economic depression, with its declining or deflated prices, to be opposite in tendency from the inflationary pressures that accompanied rapid economic growth. Previously economic remedies to counter depression had involved state expenditures to “prime the pump,” but they now seemed to increase inflation without remedying the depressed state of the economy. The often arcane economic issues related to combating stagflation divided economists and politicians for the rest of the century and into the next; remedying it by cutting back government expenditures was central to Margaret Thatcher’s program (discussed below), along with a new emphasis on market incentives and a generally reduced faith in the role of the state in addressing social and economic problems.

In retrospect, the 1970s and 1980s have come to appear less economically beleaguered than European contemporaries tended to think. As with the “great depression” of the 1880s, there was a decline in the annual rate of economic growth (from around 4.5 percent in the 1950s and 1960s down to around 2 percent in the 1970s and 1980s), but not an absolute decline. In fact, there was less of a decline in the rate of growth than in the 1880s. Europeans adjusted in various ways to the oil embargo (e.g., atomic power, conservation measures). Technological developments and new discoveries of oil fields in the North Sea eventually helped to make Britain and Norway exporters of oil. And there were other, more favorable economic developments. With De Gaulle out of power, Britain finally joined the Common Market in 1973, expanding it significantly and enhancing its economic potential. In spite, then, of the slower growth rate of the 1970s and 1980s, Europe remained a relatively prosperous, economically dynamic area.

At the same time, Europe's economic relationship with the United States was shifting in ways that would have been hardly imaginable at the end of World War II. Already by the mid-1960s, economic competition between the United States and the Common Market countries had become an irritant in relations between the two; by the early 1970s, that competition was becoming a major concern for the United States, which was running a trade deficit of some 10 billion dollars a year with Europe. The older sense of Uncle Sam – that fabulously rich relative – was being replaced by a feeling that Europeans, at least those in the most advanced European economies, were beginning to enjoy greater material welfare than were the Americans. However, economic tensions between Europe and the United States were managed reasonably, for the most part, since both areas continued to recognize their common economic interests, shared values, and enemies.

The Restive Soviet Bloc in the 1970s and 1980s

Such agreement on fundamentals was less the case within the Soviet Bloc countries, where deeply rooted historical antipathies persisted, resentment of Soviet domination festered, and the economic difficulties in the 1970s and 1980s became ever more severe. By the 1970s, the various economies of the Bloc had evolved in substantially different directions, but, even where there was a slowly rising standard of living, many in the Soviet Bloc were left dissatisfied; rising incomes often seemed to awaken appetites as much as appease resentments. Hungary, so brutally repressed in 1956, evolved in relatively “liberal” directions, both economic and cultural, without major objections from Soviet leaders. “Goulash Communism” began to provide notably more abundant consumer goods and greater intellectual freedom than existed in the Soviet Union. East Germany, too, made considerable economic progress, if it also turned into one of the most chillingly efficient secret-police states in history. Romanian Communist leaders embarked on an independent foreign policy, resented but tolerated by Soviet leaders, mostly because Romania was a poor and relatively weak country. Yugoslavia, of course, had established independence from Soviet control since the early years of the Cold War.

One of the ten clauses, or Principles, of the Helsinki Accords of 1975, number nine promised economic cooperation and mutual aid between the states signing the Accords (the thirty-five signatories included nearly all of Europe's states, as well as the United States, Canada, and the Soviet Union). In the ensuing years, the Soviet Bloc countries, as well as the Soviet Union itself, came to rely more and more on loans, investments, and other forms of economic aid from western Europe and the United States in order to solve – or to postpone solving – their many economic problems. But that tendency meant a rising foreign debt and an implicit dependence on good relations with the West. In a more subtle way, the mood of détente of the 1970s opened eastern Europe to Western influence, however much the Soviet and Eastern Bloc leaders continued in their clumsy efforts to limit cultural “contamination” from the West.

That proved a Sisyphean task, one that even the super-efficient East German *Stasi* (secret police) managed imperfectly. The question of which system, capitalism or Communism, would “bury” the other remained a live one even in the 1970s, but on the Communist side there were growing signs that its members were much closer to the

grave. Khrushchev's ambitious reforms had not worked, and Brezhnev had then presided over a decrepit economy and dispirited population. By the 1980s, President Reagan was openly taunting Soviet leaders to "take down this [Berlin] wall!" The American president became not only the most popular Republican president since Eisenhower inside the United States but also a shining hero to many in Soviet Bloc countries.

Poland and Solidarity

A deeper truth emerged by the 1980s: Communism, while not an utter failure in all regards or to the same degree in all countries, was far from living up to expectations, even if capitalism was also having a difficult time. This truth became most evident in Poland, where developments proved influential in the ultimate collapse of Communist rule throughout eastern Europe. Poland, as the largest of the Soviet Bloc countries in territory and population, was a country that Soviet leaders watched with special concern, while also being reticent to invade it, since such an invasion promised to be even more protracted and bloody than the invasion of Hungary in 1956 had been.

Gomulka, relatively popular when he assumed power in 1956 and making a number of concessions to Polish reality (such as allowing private ownership of land by peasants and giving considerable leeway to the Catholic Church), had grown ever more repressive. When he introduced major increases in the price of food in December 1970, he faced angry demonstrations in Gdansk (former Danzig) and other Baltic cities. Soon matters got out of hand; hundreds of demonstrators were killed by the Polish forces of order. In an attempt to regain calm, party leaders removed Gomulka from power, food prices were lowered, and other unpopular measures were retracted. But the new Communist leader, Edward Gierek, who exercised power for the next decade, proved to be yet another disappointment. It is doubtful that any Communist leader could have effectively countered the increasingly stubborn opposition to Communist rule in Poland. Leadership of the country's trade unions was moving, again with seemingly inexorable force, completely out of Communist hands.

Margaret Thatcher, prime minister in Britain in the same decade as Gierek in Poland, charged in her 1979 electoral campaign that "Labour is not working!" In the British context, the charge involved a double entendre (that the workers were lazy, not working, but also that the Labour Party and its associated trade unions were not functioning adequately, and that new leadership was necessary); in Poland it was Communism, the supposed voice of the workers, that was not working, and, while Thatcher ultimately succeeded in humbling the bureaucratized British trade unions, in Poland Gierek faced unions, a working class, and a general population of an entirely different temper. There was little doubt that the Polish workers had been "working" (laboring long hours under harsh conditions) – and even less doubt that Polish labor was looking for new leadership.

This new trade-union movement became known as Solidarity. The name was often retained in its Polish original, *Solidarność*, in other countries; in the 1980s, stylized posters with that name emblazoned across them came to rival the posters of the Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara in international visibility. Solidarity's leading figure, Lech Wałęsa, came to rival Dubček in the extent to which he was regarded as a heroic figure, lionized inside Poland and out – and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

in 1983. However, unlike Dubček, Wałęsa was a practicing Catholic and confirmed Polish nationalist, not a Communist.

A catalytic series of events in Poland came in the summer of 1980, with a massive strike wave, during which there remained little doubt that Poland's workers, to say nothing of the rest of the population, had not only lost faith in but also run out of patience with Communist rule. Communist authorities in Poland, moreover, now doubted more than ever that violent repression was feasible, since both Polish soldiers and police had begun to fraternize with the strikers.

Did that mean that order would be restored by a massive Soviet invasion? Complex maneuvers and negotiations with strike leaders continued for over a year, until the Polish army, under orders of the Minister of Defense, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, suddenly intervened, arresting the strike leaders and declaring martial law. Jaruzelski argued quite openly that, in order to prevent a Soviet invasion, rule by the Polish military was necessary. In fact, the possibility of an invasion also alarmed Wałęsa and other strike leaders. However, the institution of a military dictatorship in Poland carried an awkward symbolic meaning: Military dictatorships had characterized the past in Poland and much of eastern Europe. Where, then, was Communism heading, forward or backward? Communists had always considered themselves "progressives," but did that label still fit? In this broader sense, too, Communism was not working.

West Germany's Ostpolitik: Management of Modern Capitalism

In West Germany a so-called "grand coalition" of the SPD and the Christian Democrats had been formed in December 1966. The long-time leader of the SPD, Willy Brandt, had been a popular mayor in Berlin from 1957 to 1966, and became foreign minister under the grand coalition. In 1969, allied with the Free Democrats alone, he became chancellor. This was the first time a Social Democrat had achieved the office of chancellor since 1930. Brandt represented for many a breath of fresh air in a country led for over two decades by Christian Democrats – not known for their openness to change, especially in foreign policy.

Brandt's life story was an inspiration to many Germans, especially the younger generation, with so few heroes in recent history. Born out of wedlock to a poor family in 1913, Brandt was active in the left wing of the SPD on the eve of the Nazi takeover. He spent most of the war years in exile in Norway and Sweden. By 1969, while having firmly established his anti-Communist credentials, he also hoped to reduce Cold War tensions and enhance West Germany's image as a peace-loving country. His Ostpolitik ("eastern policy," or opening to the east) contrasted with the uncompromising stance of the Christian Democrats in regard to the Communists, especially those ruling East Germany. The picture of Brandt in 1970 kneeling before a monument to the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto became another icon of the time. In the same year he became *Time* magazine's man of the year, and in the next year won the Nobel Peace Prize.

His five years as chancellor were often turbulent. His bitterest critics considered Communism to be an absolute evil, on a par with Nazism, and thus his opening to the



Figure 26.1 Willy Brandt kneeling at a monument to the Jewish dead, Warsaw, 1970.

Source: © Interfoto / Alamy.

Communists appeared akin to Chamberlain's appeasement of the Nazis. Moreover, in the context of German history and Germany's various alliances with Russia, the *Westpolitik* (or western orientation) of the Christian Democrats represented an important postwar statement about the Federal Republic's firm commitment to Western-style democracy. Rather than admiring Brandt for enhancing the image of the anti-Nazi "good German," the German right wing was more likely to fault him for leaving his country during the Nazi period and for taking up Norwegian citizenship. Other critics simply believed that any offers to cooperate with Communists were inherently dangerous; better simply to "bury" them – that is, to continue a hard-line policy of competition and confrontation. There were also those, among the millions of Germans expelled from Poland and other areas in eastern Europe, who still nursed hopes of a return to their homes; they naturally feared the implications of any compromises Brandt might work out with the Communists.

Brandt's achievements in office included a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1970, followed by pacts with East Germany and Poland that recognized the permanence of the borders put in place at the end of the war, most importantly the Oder-Neisse boundaries with Poland. Brandt's foreign-policy initiatives reached a culmination, merging with the efforts of others, in the Helsinki Accords of 1975,

putting a formal end to World War II, recognizing existing European borders, and agreeing to settle international disputes peacefully.

By the early 1970s, Brandt had become Germany's most popular chancellor since the creation of the Federal Republic, especially outside the country. His alliance with the Free Democrats limited the domestic reforms he could entertain, but he still managed to introduce a number of them. Under his leadership, the SPD replaced the Christian Democratic Party as Germany's largest party, though it still fell slightly short of an absolute majority of popular votes.

Brandt's term as chancellor came to an abrupt halt in 1974. One of his closest advisers was revealed to be a spy for East Germany, and Brandt felt obliged to resign. He had been dogged by other allegations, among them marital infidelity, problems with alcohol, and bouts of depression. The spy scandal seems to have served as a catalyst for his resignation rather than its basic cause. By his own testimony he was "no saint" in his personal life; he had, moreover, worked himself to a state of exhaustion in his foreign-policy initiatives, to which were added the mounting economic repercussions of the oil crisis of 1973. Nonetheless, after resigning as chancellor, he retained his Bundestag seat and his position as head of the SPD.

Brandt was replaced as chancellor by Helmut Schmidt, a younger man of impressive abilities, closer to the political center of the SPD but also a more capable manager than Brandt. His sharp tongue and sometimes patronizing tone were resented by some, but his hard work and efficiency were at the same time valued even by his opponents. He remained in office for eight years and gave West Germany a forceful, competent leadership. The years in which Brandt and Schmidt were chancellors have been seen as German social democracy's high point. However, its domestic achievements were more in the direction of effectively managing modern welfare capitalism, as distinguished from the older social-democratic goals of fundamental economic reorganization and social egalitarianism. Schmidt's management skills, which involved making cuts in government expenditures that outraged many on the SPD's hard left, were part of the reason that Germany made it through the 1970s in better economic shape than other countries where socialist parties had been in power, especially Britain.

The power of trade unions came to be a focus of complaint in Britain, as did the rising percentage of the country's gross national product going to social services, especially since worker productivity in the country was declining. Both Conservative and Labour Party prime ministers during the 1970s were frustrated with Britain's trade unions and saw reining them in as crucial to improving the country's economic performance, but leaders of both parties had little success in doing so. By the end of the 1970s, anti-union sentiments had spread to parts of the population that had previously been sympathetic to Labour, which was part of the reason that voters turned to the Conservative Party and Margaret Thatcher in 1979. More subtly, the emotions associated with a long tradition of sympathy for the working-class underdog became diluted or confused; union leaders came to seem more like *mafiosi* than selfless idealists leading an oppressed and redemptive proletariat. In an ironic way, then, a similar question was being asked as in Poland about the military: Were unions progressive?

Gorbachev and Glasnost, 1985–9

Developments in the Soviet Bloc countries in the 1980s were intertwined with those inside the Soviet Union, and once again the appearance of a remarkable personality had implications that appear decisive, making possible what previously had been considered unthinkable. Leonid Brezhnev ruled for eighteen years (1964–82), longer than any Soviet leader but Stalin. Most of his rule (and that of his two aged and ailing successors, from 1982 to 1985) became known as the Era of Stagnation. How a man like Mikhail Gorbachev could assume power in such a country has intrigued many observers, much as in the case with Alexander Dubček. There was something disarmingly open and



Figure 26.2 Still smiling after a very hectic day in the Big Apple, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife Raisa display their endurance as they attend a reception in their honor, December 8, 1987. *Source:* © Bettmann / CORBIS.

honest about both of them. Gorbachev had an assertive, fashionably dressed “modern” wife, who was also an intellectual companion to him, in striking contrast to the spouses of Soviet leaders since Stalin’s time. Yet both Gorbachev and Dubček had been successful *apparatchiki* (party bureaucrats). How did they acquire and retain values that seemed so contrary to the Soviet norm? Both professed to be followers of Leninism, yet both implicitly put Leninist principles of elitist party rule into question.

At fifty-four, Gorbachev was no youngster but nonetheless was the youngest member of the politburo when chosen to lead it in 1985. Most of the other top members were in their seventies and in poor health. However, the problems Gorbachev faced were considerably more daunting than its aged, uninspiring leadership; Communism was supposed to be out-producing capitalism, but the United States and most western-European nations were steadily increasing the distance of their already significant lead in production and productivity. Moreover, industrial pollution in the Soviet Union and most Soviet Bloc countries was reaching catastrophic levels.

In that regard, the nuclear accident at the Chernobyl plant, in Soviet Ukraine, in late May 1986 – a year after Gorbachev had assumed power – took on great importance. The Chernobyl meltdown was the worst nuclear power accident in history, alarming enough in itself, but the initial cover-ups surrounding it meant that millions were exposed to dangerous levels of radiation. In assuming leadership of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev had proposed “openness” (*glasnost*); the Chernobyl catastrophe was all too obviously the result of the lack of it. Bolshevik rule had been based on a closed, often secretive control by an elite; free thought and open access to information for the general population had long been dismissed by party leaders as naive and even dangerous notions, as was “formal” majority rule unguided by Leninist leadership. In practice, even within the higher party ranks, free expression of opinion had long been severely circumscribed. Even after Stalin’s death and Khrushchev’s reforms, the party operated bureaucratically, not openly and democratically. Similarly, *perestroika*, Gorbachev’s proposed reorganization and decentralization of the economy, while looking attractive in principle, did not work in practice because it challenged entrenched bureaucracies. It also disrupted the routines and work habits that generations of ordinary Soviet citizens had acquired under centralized direction.

Gorbachev was apparently sincere in his belief that glasnost would generate greater popularity for Communist rule and that perestroika would significantly improve its economic performance. On both counts, his beliefs were revealed as ill-founded. There was initially much popular enthusiasm for greater openness, but that enthusiasm detracted from support for Communist rule rather than enhancing it. As with Dubček’s “human-face” Communism, the initial enthusiasm for reforms quickly got out of control. Moreover, when offered a genuinely free choice, the peoples of most non-Russian Soviet republics favored independence from the Soviet Union. Even in the Russian-speaking areas, the Communist Party was unable to generate a reliable majority in reasonably open elections and a relatively free press.

Gorbachev’s economic reforms proved even less effective than those of Khrushchev; by the late 1980s, the Soviet Union was facing severe shortages in basic food supplies. Moreover, “openness” meant not only open discussion of current affairs but also filling in the many “blank spaces” of Soviet history, as Gorbachev termed them, and that was a large order. It meant going back over what Khrushchev in 1956 had dubbed “the crimes of the Stalin era” – the show trials and mass arrests of the late 1930s – but also

over such still hugely sensitive issues as the murders of Polish officers at Katyn Forest during World War II. There was much in the blank spaces of Soviet history that most Soviet leaders – and ordinary citizens – were not yet ready to “master,” at least not in ways comparable to what was being done by the Germans, French, or Italians by the 1980s.

The Disintegration of Communist Rule

Few observers, even by the late 1980s, expected Communist rule to disintegrate so suddenly or so completely. There was no little irony in that fact that Gorbachev, the sincere Communist, gained his greatest popularity outside the Soviet Union even as support for him dwindled inside the Soviet Union. “Gorby,” as he became known abroad, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990. Few recipients deserved it more, even if it came at a much greater price than he had anticipated. Still, history has rarely seen such profound changes with so little violence. Gorbachev proved different from Brezhnev or Khrushchev in many ways, but in one most crucially: He was not willing to preserve Communist rule with brute force. Once he had made it clear to the Soviet Bloc countries that they could introduce reforms without fear of Soviet military intervention, the days of Communism’s rule in them were numbered, since Communist rule was not and never had been based on a solid or reliable majority. Moreover, even granting that in some countries, such as Czechoslovakia, a significant part of the population had at least initially been open to the notion of Communist rule, that attitude had not lasted, and in many other areas, notably Poland, a strong majority of the population had always detested Communism.

Communism had been in power much longer in the Soviet Union and had entered more deeply into the habits and routines of the common people, but there, too, Western-style elections, ones that allowed non-Communist parties to run, proved to be the beginning of the end. Part of the population did remain attached to the ideals and practices – or at least the habits and perquisites – of Communism, but a larger and growing part expressed a hearty desire to be free of them. Some of the Communist parties in western Europe survived for a while longer, but the ultimate incompatibility between Communist ideals, even Eurocommunist ideals, and the freedoms and prosperity offered by Western-style democracy became ever more apparent.

From Mystique (1989–90) to Politique (1991–2012)

A man falling into a deep slumber in late 1945 and awakening in 2012 would have been far more bewildered than Rip Van Winkle had been after slumbering through the years of the American Revolution. In 2012 Europe had recovered beyond anyone’s expectations in late 1945. A “long peace” of around sixty-five years had prevailed, and Europeans had attained a level of material prosperity envied throughout the world (even if that prosperity seemed threatened after 2007). The Soviet Union had disappeared, and there was now a European Union, encompassing twenty-seven countries, seventeen of them under a common currency. A woman was chancellor of Germany. An Afro-American had been elected president of the United States, and he had appointed a woman as his secretary of state. One of the major issues being

considered by the European Union was whether Islamic Turkey – so long considered “not Europe” – would be allowed to join it.

Even after a mere decade of sleep, from 1981 to 1991, anyone would have been astonished by the changes. The year 1989 now stands as a year of miracles, one of the major turning points of European history. Perhaps the most miraculous aspect of that year (or more precisely the year from late 1989 to late 1990) was its low level of violence, even while events of enormous import were taking place, prominent among them the disintegration of Communist rule in both eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the unification of Germany, and the end of the Cold War.

In the United States and western Europe, the initial sense by late 1990 was “we won!” That exultation was soon enough followed by more sober, even saturnine assessments (“everything begins in *mystique* and ends in *politique*”). The shocking attacks of September 11, 2001, symbolized the new threats and an unfamiliar world emerging. Within the following decade, Europe’s economic future began to look precarious. Similarly, the area’s further progress toward unification ran into some major obstacles. The “Arab Spring” of 2011 initiated the destruction of dictatorships in much of the neighboring Arab world, with highly uncertain implications for Europe’s long-range future, to say nothing of international relations more generally.

In the formerly Communist world, the prevailing popular mood in 1989–90 was not so much “we lost!” as one of cautiously hopeful expectations about “the magical, beautiful word democracy,” as one observer put it. Insofar as there were celebrations in former Communist lands, they were more short-lived than in the West; in many areas the challenge of fashioning fundamentally new economic and political institutions proved overwhelming. The citizens of the former German Democratic Republic were the most fortunate, in strictly economic terms at least, since they were speedily taken over by a prosperous West Germany, becoming part of a united Germany. With around 80 million citizens, Germany became Europe’s most populous country, its status as the economic powerhouse of the European Union reinforced.

In other areas, the transition was decidedly more laborious and painful. As was the case after the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, functioning liberal-democratic institutions did not last in those areas that had little previous experience of them. Many of the Soviet Bloc states, and even more the successor states to the Soviet Union, reverted to authoritarian rule, often corrupt and inefficient. Nonetheless, in the generation after 1989, there was much variety in the experiences of the formerly Communist areas and some hopeful signs of genuine democratization, as in the so-called Orange Revolution of 2004–5 in Ukraine, in which popular demonstrations led to the reversal of previously rigged elections.

From Soviet Union to Russian Federation

The transformation of the Soviet Union into the Russian Federation and fourteen other independent republics was formally complete by January 1993. The process was disorderly and at times violent, but in pure human misery it was nothing like the transformation of Russia, from 1917 to 1921, from tsarist to Communist rule. The Russian Federation, with about 80 percent of its population ethnically Russian, still

extended beyond the Urals into Siberia and included around eighty-five federated areas, with widely varying ethnic mixes, borders that were repeatedly being renegotiated, and different degrees of autonomy being recognized. The Russian Federation was officially recognized as taking over the state responsibilities of the Soviet Union, including its treaties with other nations and its seat in the UN Security Council, but the Federation's diverse and far-flung citizenry were by no means unanimously content with the new arrangements. In various polls taken ten to fifteen years later, large numbers described the fall of the Soviet Union as a tragedy, and around a quarter of them reported that they would be happy to see its return. More tellingly, in a 2011 poll only around 10 percent considered the events of 1991 to have been a genuine victory for democracy. But what democracy meant to those polled remained unclear; many still yearned for "strong" leadership – which they got in 2000 when a former KGB official, Vladimir Putin, became president, overseeing extensive reforms and impressive economic growth. His attachment to liberal-democratic norms was doubtful, but his popularity was real, and he was far from being another Stalin.

At any rate, the Cold War was over, not really because of any formal declaration of peace but because one side, that of the Communists, had disintegrated from within, whereas the other side, that of the liberal democracies, remained relatively strong and stable. Similarly, whatever the various dissatisfactions with developments within the area of the former Soviet Union, previously unimaginable changes had taken place there. Who, even in the 1980s, would have believed that Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, or the Baltic nations (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) would be allowed by Soviet leaders to form into sovereign nation-states? The breakup of the Soviet Union represented more than an end to the dream of world revolution; the Russian empire, expansionist for centuries, was also largely a thing of the past. Nonetheless, the Russian Federation encompassed a vast territory; it was still the largest country in the world, approximately twice as large as the United States, though with a half as numerous a population (c. 145 million compared to 300 million in 2010). The new Russia no longer challenged the United States as a major power, but it retained long-range potential for economic growth, especially given its rich natural resources, including natural gas and petroleum.

The Unification of Germany

A swift and peaceful reunification of Germany was scarcely less imaginable in the 1980s. The prospect of a united Germany had been vehemently opposed by non-Germans immediately after World War II, and even by the 1980s there was scant enthusiasm for it outside Germany. However, effective countermeasures did not emerge, in part because reunification happened so fast, but also because by 1990 a united German nation was no longer believed to pose the kinds of threats it had in the past. The new Germany was about 25 percent smaller than Bismarck's Reich had been, and Germans showed few signs of expansionist or revanchist designs. One of the most stirring events of 1989 was the breaching and subsequent demolition of the Berlin wall, spontaneously initiated on November 9 and accompanied by festive fraternization between East and West Germans. The East German police and military remained passive, some of its members even joining in the festivities.

Many years would pass before the entire wall was demolished – in a physical sense but even more in a metaphorical one (the “wall” in the minds of Germans). The integration of the two economies and societies proved a more daunting enterprise than anticipated, so much so that a significant proportion of Germans from both sides came to regret reunification, or at least to bemoan its staggering costs. Frictions between *Ossis* (former East Germans) and *Wessis* (former West Germans) endured well into the twenty-first century, while *Ostalgie* (east nostalgia) lingered among the *Ossis*. It was not an entirely serious sentiment – witness the tongue-in-cheek fondness for the Trabant (East Germany’s pathetic economy car, with its noisy, polluting two-stroke engine) – but *Ostalgie* underlined the extent to which many former East Germans experienced their new lives as more hurried, materialistic, and atomized. Memories of life under Communism took on rosy hues: In those years there had been a more tranquil, less materialistic togetherness, some believed.

The Breakup of Former Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia

In the multiethnic areas once ruled by the Habsburgs and broken into separate nations in 1919, ethnically cleansed from 1939 to 1945, and then “sovietized” in the immediate postwar years (except for Austria), there was the most diversity following 1989–90. The Czechs and Slovaks, artificially joined in 1919 and never managing to become a genuinely united people, split into separate republics in 1993, peacefully. The Czechs could thereafter claim that liberal democracy functioned reasonably well in their republic, whereas the smaller and less economically developed Slovakian Republic got off to a more uncertain start. However, matters definitely began to look up economically after Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004.

Yugoslavia, also representing a merger of ethnic groups that failed to establish an enduring sense of common national identity, disintegrated – violently. The brutal conflicts there in the 1990s constituted the most significant exception to the generally non-violent transitions from Communism. Another exception was in neighboring Romania, where clashes associated with the fall of Communism cost hundreds of lives, and where the country’s Communist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, was arrested, tried, and put to death within a few days. Other Communist leaders escaped that fate, but Ceaușescu was a brutal megalomaniac whose violent end came as no surprise, nor was it the cause of much regret thereafter. In Austria and Hungary, as well as in Poland, parliamentary democracy functioned better than in the interwar years, which of course is not saying a great deal. There was little if any nostalgia about the Communist past in Poland and Hungary, whereas Austria continued to exist with a remarkable degree of amnesia about its Nazi past, but also largely respected liberal-democratic norms.

Western Europe: From Common Market to European Union

The year 1989 did not witness any sudden or miraculous change in western Europe. European economic integration continued to make steady if at times bumpy progress in the 1990s. As we have seen, the process had begun quite modestly in the immediate

postwar years, and surmounting the obstacles to economic integration thereafter had been helped by financial support from the United States. With the collapse of Communism in eastern and central Europe, it was only natural to ask whether former Communist countries should be invited to become part of the Common Market. The answer from existing members was hardly an enthusiastic “yes,” but nonetheless most former Eastern Bloc countries did join in the next two decades.

With international power relationships as well as patterns of trade shifting so extensively after 1989, it was also natural to ask whether Europe’s relationship with the United States should remain as before. The answers ranged from “maybe” to “mostly,” but the earlier frictions between Europe and the United States, which had been largely contained because of the Cold War, were bound to take on new meaning, given the American nation’s status as the only superpower, with its attention drawn to the Pacific and to Asia, with the rise of China, to say nothing of the unending crises in the Middle East and Africa.

In 1993 the Common Market became the European Union, a name change that indicated some exceedingly ambitious projects economically, prominent among them a single currency and more fully integrated banking policies. The European Union also moved, however warily, in the direction of establishing more powerful central political institutions. The introduction of a single currency, known as the euro, had many positive economic results, but before long it also starkly exposed the challenges and dilemmas of including areas that were much less developed economically and significantly different culturally. In fact, the introduction of the euro diminished the control of individual states over their economies in ways that exposed deep anxieties about the diminution of the sovereignty of individual nations in the European Union, especially after the economic turmoil that began in 2007.

For many countries, especially the newer members, such as Ireland, Spain, and Slovakia, membership in the European Union provided an unquestionably beneficial economic stimulus. But the initial reservations in most of the more economically developed nations about the new members lingered – and revived strongly after 2007. A number of political leaders, notably Margaret Thatcher, had expressed deep reservations about the European Union. She had also been quite wary of German unification, but she and other British leaders were most of all concerned about the wide-ranging implications of adopting the euro, which Britain finally refused to do. Many of the details of the evolution of the European Union became dizzying in their complexity, inherently difficult for the general public to evaluate, which is one of many reasons that popular support for the European Union remained passive rather than passionate.

Still, while the acrimony associated with the evolving European Union often made front-page news, for most of the time between 1989 and 2007, a deeper satisfaction prevailed: Europeans were enjoying unprecedented levels of material comfort and personal security. More importantly, over a half-century had passed and Europeans had avoided killing one another by the millions; their various quarrels had mostly to do with arcane issues of economic management and relatively subtle infringements of national sovereignty. War between Europe’s states, especially a general war, seemed securely a thing of the past.

National unification in the nineteenth century had also faced enduring resistance from various parts of the population and provincial areas, but that resistance had been

overwhelmed by “events” (wars, mostly), by rising nationalist intoxication, and by charismatic leaders. The formation of national identity involves many factors, among them powerful myths and associated heroes, but the European Union produced no leaders comparable to Napoleon I, Bismarck, or Garibaldi. Similarly, perceived threats to the nation had previously enhanced national feeling in powerful ways, but the European Union after 1993 experienced no threats comparable to those faced by individual European nations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The slowly evolving constitution of the European Union, reaching a crucial point with the Lisbon Treaty of December 2009, was highly detailed and conceptually sophisticated, but few if any observers described it as a document that inspired self-sacrificing devotion. The anthem of the Union, the “Ode to Joy” (words by Schiller, put to music in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony), was widely recognized for its beauty, but when called upon to sing it most European audiences did not know the words.

In short, while European unification had many cerebral and material attractions, it lacked the powerful mystique of nineteenth-century nationalism and the context of nationalist competition. The “faceless bureaucrats in Brussels,” or “Eurocrats,” were respected, at least in some quarters, for their technical competence, but they were not embraced with much enthusiasm by Europe’s population at large. Similarly, the political institutions of the European Union by the second decade of the twenty-first century did not have the emotional attractions of, say, *la république sociale* in France, or what Abraham Lincoln had termed a government “of the people, for the people, by the people.” No war was fought to establish the European Union, and few Europeans appeared ready to risk their lives and fortunes to defend it. Perhaps more to the point, they were never asked to do so.

There was a spreading sense by the early years of the twenty-first century that Europe was entering an era in which the memories of 1914–45 were no longer so integral to European identity. Those memories, which of course pulled in many directions, were dwindling not only because of the passage of decades but also because a cluster of new memories and new issues were nudging them aside. The extent to which Europe’s tragic past had been genuinely “mastered” by 2010 must remain moot, but in palpable generational terms there were some inescapable new realities by that date: Most Europeans who had been adults during World War II were now six feet under, and those few who had survived into advanced old age had long been removed from positions of responsibility. Even the next generation, the rebellious youths of 1968, were joining the worn-out and retiring – facing the indignant rebukes of newer generations for a myriad of new problems. Such are the ironies of history.

The implications of the large relative numbers of that retiring generation were among those problems. It might be said that, by the early twenty-first century, the “age bulge” of those born in the years immediately after World War II represented Europe’s most daunting challenge insofar as that population, entering into non-productive retirement, was being economically supported by a relatively small and declining proportion of the population. The issue seemed all the more foreboding in light of the steadily declining birth rate of native Europeans and the rising numbers of non-European immigrants with distinctly higher birthrates.

There was, in short, an inexorably growing proportion of Europe’s population that was non-European and non-Christian in recent origin. The European identity of that

population, or the extent of the assimilation of that population to long-standing European values, remained uncertain. It was likely to be substantially different from the values of those with Christian and European-born forebears, though “how different” was the more fundamental question. In this sense, the issue recalled the Jewish Question prior to 1939 (could these “foreign” non-Christians become “real” Europeans?), though the absolute numbers and relative proportions of non-European immigrants in western Europe by the second decade of the twenty-first century substantially exceeded those of Jews before 1939, especially in western Europe.

Those immigrants and their numerous progeny represented another age bulge, with some fairly specific implications, since they obviously felt less obliged – if obliged at all – to master Europe’s past of 1914 to 1945. More precisely, they tended to focus on different aspects of that past, especially its imperialism and its racist attitudes to non-Europeans. Europe’s wars and their related horrors were not matters about which recent immigrants had guilty consciences. Similarly, they felt no responsibility for the Holocaust. Most of the Arabs among them believed, on the contrary, that Arab Palestinians had paid a terrible and unjust price for Europe’s Jewish problem, since the state of Israel was established on what they considered to be Arab land, and the establishment of that state involved an ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of native Arabs to provide room for non-native Jewish settlers from Europe. Mastering *that* past, especially insofar as Europe’s imperial powers had played a decisive role in it, came to attract growing interest and controversy (further covered in Chapter 27).

Further Reading

Chapter 25 and Chapter 26 overlap in many regards, and the books recommended in the Further Reading section for Chapter 25 are mostly relevant for Chapter 26 as well. Those include the following: Renate Bridenthal et al., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (1997); Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (1997); Carole Fink et al., eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (1998); Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present* (1999); David Childs, *The Two Red Flags: European Social Democracy and Soviet Communism since 1945* (2000); Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2004); William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945–2002* (2004); and Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (2006).

Among the more recent studies of Gorbachev is I.D. Oppenheim and Ian Davies, *Gorbachev, the Rise and Fall of a Hero* (2012).

27 Europe in Two Centuries

An Epilogue and General Assessment

The years 1943–89 constitute a reasonably clear historical period (the Cold War and its immediate origins), the understanding of which has been enhanced by many penetrating works of history. The more recent past presents greater problems of perspective and historical understanding, problems that become all the greater as the recent past nears the immediate present. Professional historians are leery of large-scale conclusions about the meaning of the recent past, though modern historical understanding is by its nature constantly being revised, inexorably shifting its interests and perspectives, because of things happening in the present or the recent past.

The meaning of the past, remote or recent, appears to be constantly changing, or at least seems anything but crystal clear; complete consensus about that meaning, even among professional historians, will never be achieved. Yet, just as we cannot utterly ignore our personal past – and moreover cannot resist trying to make sense of it – so we cannot ignore the pasts of our nations and cannot resist trying to make sense of them, however futile it may seem at times. In both cases, “identity” gradually emerges, whether based on mythic self-flattery or on more honest efforts to grapple with the often painful evidence before us. For most people and most countries, identity is an ungainly, shifting mixture of both – but scientific it is not.

The Preface and many subsequent chapters have referred to the problematic issue of “the lessons of history,” which so often have been revealed as false – mostly because those lessons have been crudely constructed or are blatantly self-interested – often leading to tragedies even worse than those that the lessons of history supposedly addressed. Nonetheless, while we must be wary of iron-clad or simplistic lessons, an informed awareness of the past can at least engender a more sophisticated approach to present problems and dilemmas.



Map 27.1 Europe, 2010.

This final chapter may be considered a modest effort to arrive at an evaluation of the last two centuries of European history, revisiting the major themes of the book in the process. This chapter is especially mindful of the danger of misjudging the long-range importance of events close to the time of writing (mid-2012), but it also takes note of some of the key developments since the early 1990s.

Europe's Evolving Identity

After 1945, Europe's once-powerful individual nation-states were obliged to recognize their much-diminished power in relation to the two emerging superpowers. In a broader way, the notion of the absolute sovereignty of the European state, dating back at least to the seventeenth century, was put into more serious question than ever before. The League of Nations had represented an effort to limit that sovereignty, but it was a notable failure, and whether the United Nations would be much more effective than the League in preventing war remained unclear to many European leaders. A deeper issue was the modern concept of the absolute sovereignty of the people in the nation-state, an issue that arose in the trials beginning in late 1945 at Nuremberg of Nazi leaders who claimed that they were merely following the orders of the popularly supported and legal ruler, Adolf Hitler. Was it possible, then, that the popular will could itself be immoral or at least blind to reality? Were there universal principles of human rights that could overrule the majority voice of the people?

These were by no means entirely new questions; nineteenth-century thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill, had worried about the tyranny of the majority, but few, even those conservatives appalled by the French Revolution, had anticipated how horrific that tyranny might become (or how difficult it would be in practice to determine what the popular will actually was). Consensus in Europe and America about such matters, whether goals or means, did not emerge after 1945. The first successful steps toward greater unity in Western Europe thus turned out to be cautious and implicitly long-range, concentrating on economic integration, based on the belief that countries whose economies were integrated with one another would be incapable of waging a modern war against one another. That argument had been used before 1914, and now it was understood that the nature of the integration had necessarily to be more extensive.

In posing the question "What is Europe?," the Introduction observed that "not Asia" and "not America" were among the most succinct responses, but they were not really adequate ones. Further refinements to that many-sided question are now in order. Over the span of two hundred years, European identity obviously altered in substantial ways, but the question remains how much it retained certain essential traits. One way that the question might be addressed is by a scrutiny of the most measurable changes, comparing the early nineteenth century with the early twenty-first. In particular, how successfully had Europeans dealt with the "questions" that they so optimistically framed in the early nineteenth century?

Europe in 1815 was in the midst of a population explosion, accompanied by an unprecedented expansion of economic productivity, itself linked to path-breaking scientific and technological advances. The absolute numbers of people of European origin, as well as their percentage of the world's peoples, expanded throughout most of

the century. The raw power of those burgeoning millions of Europeans grew astonishingly. Two centuries later, in the period immediately following the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon (December 2009), women of European lineage were having far fewer children, marrying later (if at all), and divorcing more frequently than ever before. The percentage of Europeans in the world's population, shrinking for some time in the twentieth century, seemed destined to shrink even more rapidly in the twenty-first.

It could be said that in the nineteenth century Europeans and others of European origin took over the world; the evolving identity of Europeans was bound to be influenced by their extraordinary power. But, by the second half of the twentieth century, Europe's empires were being dismantled, and the previously assumed superiority of Europeans was being challenged on many fronts. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Europeans were declining not only in relative numbers but also in influence and prestige in the rest of the world. If any area in the early twenty-first century seemed likely to replicate the nineteenth-century rise of Europe (or of the "European" United States in the second half of the twentieth century) to world power, it was Asia, especially China and India, with their huge populations and dizzying rates of annual economic growth (although they were areas with ominous problems as well).

Those demographic and economic shifts – and of course the calamities of 1914–45 – were bound to influence the way that European identity changed, from buoyant and arrogant by the mid-nineteenth century to a chastened, more cautious sense of what the future might hold in the twenty-first century. A related fundamental shift in Europe had to do with its continued secularization and the near abandonment of its already much-weakened Christian identity. Such was especially the case in the most economically advanced and otherwise modern areas, as attested by the empty churches, the declining numbers of weddings, births, and deaths officiated by Christian clergy, and the plummeting numbers of young Catholic men interested in becoming priests and (especially) young women who aspired to be nuns. But the mosques were full, and new ones were being constructed, even if secularization was slowly affecting Islamic immigrant communities as well.

European Liberties and Toleration

Europe's relative decline was far from absolute, and Europeans had much reason to retain a sense of pride in their civilization. For those Europeans who remained practicing Christians, modern Christianity appeared distinctly more tolerant and humane in expression than modern Islam, whatever the differences between its many sects. Secular Europeans, too, were inclined to see modern Christian values as more "advanced," more civilized, and obviously more "European" than those of "non-European" Islam. Even before 1815, Europeans had prided themselves on their "liberties," in contrast to the despotic "Orient." That identity, that sense that Europe was an area where human freedom and creativity were uniquely treasured, took on many expressions in the next two centuries – and of course experienced some appalling reverses. European liberty and creativity were closely associated with notions of the independent sovereignty of Europe's many nations, their productive interplay, and a commitment among them to prevent the establishment of a single European empire, believed to be inevitably hostile to freedom and creativity.

By the time of the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon (December 2009), the notion of a balance of power among sovereign European nations no longer had the same meaning (or range of meanings) that it had had at the time of the Congress of Vienna. However, Europeans still thought of themselves as distinctly freer, more creative, and, above all, more tolerant than any other people on the planet, with the possible exceptions of the extensions of European civilization in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. (Israel was another possible exception, but it too was considered, in terms of its political institutions and cultural creativity, largely if ambiguously a European outpost.)

The “Orient” and most other non-European areas offered little competition in the realms of freedom and toleration, and, even in the arena of economic innovation, Asia still relied heavily on European and American inventiveness as well as on their ideological models. China remained formally Communist, and Marxism had come from Europe, although that European-origin term had patently lost much of its meaning in China by the early twenty-first century. It hardly need be observed that neither “free” nor “tolerant” would be the first adjectives chosen to characterize rule by the Chinese Communist Party by in the early twenty-first century, nor would those adjectives comfortably fit most of the Islamic world, even if the Arab Spring suggested the possibility of freer, more tolerant directions. (In fact, the uprisings associated with that Spring also pointed strongly toward the possibility of a more intolerant, “Islamic” direction.) Repeated flare-ups inside Europe over such issues as whether Mohammed could be graphically represented or the extent to which women should be obliged to cover parts of their bodies underlined the extent to which many immigrants brought up under Islam had utterly different attitudes to mores cherished by Europeans, particularly in the arenas of personal freedoms and cultural-religious toleration.

Although the Europeans’ nineteenth-century belief in the power of reason and their related faith in unending material progress proved ill-founded, in terms of a range of measurable standards, Europe in the early twenty-first century was still a more “reasonable” and comfortable place than it had been two hundred years before. No doubt the European visionaries of the early nineteenth century would have been disappointed in – in some cases appalled by – the ways that the six questions of the early nineteenth century had been addressed. But those negative reactions would likely have been countered by many positive ones.

The Irish Question

If any of the questions could be termed substantially solved by the early twenty-first century, it was the Irish Question, though most residents of Ireland after 2007 were not in the mood to celebrate, given the worrisome economic problems the country faced. Still, those problems had little in common with the horrors of the 1840s and 1850s. They were also substantially different from the smoldering civil war between the Irish and political leaders in London for much of the twentieth century. In material conditions and lifestyle, Ireland by 2012 had become much more like other western-European countries; the crude nineteenth-century stereotyping of the Irish had to a large extent disappeared. Serious political problems having to do with Protestant–Catholic relations

in Northern Ireland persisted, with flare-ups well into the 1990s, but a final compromise seemed to be concluded in 1998. The Irish Question was a term that had largely disappeared from the front pages of most newspapers by 2012.

The Woman Question

There was more ambiguity about the extent which to the Woman Question had been resolved, but measurable progress had been made. By 2012, women had gained the vote in all European countries – even if they had to wait until 1970 in Switzerland – and women benefited from formal civil equality in other regards, though cultural attitudes continued to impinge upon their actual exercise of that equality. By 2012, European women, especially those in northern and western Europe, enjoyed incomparably greater personal freedom, a higher social and economic status, and overall a more equitable position as citizens than women in most of the rest of the world. Even in the arenas most resistant to the entry of women, such as high political office or trade-union officialdom, there were signs of change. There were also pervasive indications that the earlier fundamental assumptions about male and female identity were undergoing major, often unanticipated alterations in light of scientific discoveries, ones that to some degree exposed earlier formulations of the Woman Question as decidedly antiquated.

The Social Question and the Role of the State

The Social Question, too, by 2012 had developed in so many previously unanticipated directions that the original term had come to seem dated. Nonetheless, compared to their condition in 1815, the lower orders of society enjoyed a much higher material standard of living, and children had many more protections – there were few eight-year-olds gazing out of factory windows to watch the men at play. To an important extent, the remaining social problems had to do with the movement into Europe of impoverished, unskilled non-Europeans, who obviously could not be transformed immediately into skilled, well-paid workers. Moreover, as suggested above, since immigrants from areas where the status of women was quite different were entering Europe in such large numbers, a serious complicating factor was being added not only to the Woman Question but also to the Social Question.

Among the competing early nineteenth-century visions of how the Social Question should be addressed, ranging from individualistic to collectivist, there was no unquestioned victor. Those versions of capitalism that stressed maximum freedom repeatedly revealed self-destructive side effects, but those economies that stressed a large role for the state developed their own set of problems, most alarming in Soviet-style Communism but also serious in non-Communist countries. A broad consensus had emerged, dating back into the nineteenth century, that some sort of blend was unavoidable: state intervention to address issues of social justice and to control capitalism's destructive proclivities, while limiting "excessive" state power, or at least trying to reduce the self-serving bureaucracies and crippling inefficiencies associated with it, in order to benefit as much as possible from individual enterprise and a sense of

personal responsibility. But that consensus was anything but precise; where to draw the line between the opposing tendencies remained highly debatable. Moreover, the issue looked crucially different from various different national and cultural perspectives – a stumbling block of major proportions for the European Union in achieving economic integration by the second decade of the twenty-first century.

A broad consensus about the need for blending economic freedom and state power also emerged in the United States, but the line there was generally drawn much further in the direction of limiting the powers of the central state. By 2012, all major European parties, even the moderately right-wing ones, stood to the left of the American Democratic Party – a deep-seated reality, reflecting one of many ways in which European identity remained “not American!” Yet the European left itself had become chastened and much less ideologically dogmatic by 2012. The optimism about the direction of history that underlay the mystique of revolution petered out almost completely after the collapse of European Communism, and the surviving democratic-socialist elements of the left became ever more pragmatic, as exemplified in Britain by Tony Blair’s “new Labour” and the *neue Mitte* (new middle) of the German Social Democrats after Willy Brandt. The ever-growing proportion of the elderly in the general European population by the early twenty-first century had something to do with that trend, but the demonstrated inadequacies of older left-wing approaches to many economic and social issues were more fundamental.

The Eastern Question and the End of Empires

The Eastern Question, rather than being solved, had simply disappeared. The “sick man,” the Ottoman Empire, was gone, but so were the British, Dutch, French, Habsburg, and Russian empires. In a sense, however, the Eastern Question lingered: The areas that had been dominated by the Ottomans in the early nineteenth century remained major trouble spots in the early twenty-first, and Europeans were drawn into the incessant internal crises and conflicts there. The Arab–Israeli conflict spawned wars about every ten years, and some observers predicted that if a third world war was waiting in the future – one involving atomic weapons – it would break out over tensions in the Middle East. The wars in the Balkans in the 1990s occurred where the major empires had clashed a century before, providing the spark that set off the European civil war. The former Eastern Question survived as well insofar as it was the inhabitants of the former Ottoman Empire that provided a large proportion of the immigrant masses that became such a major issue in early twenty-first-century Europe.

The German Question

In many ways *the* central question of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the German Question. Reaction (or overreactions) to the rise of Germany epitomized Europe’s inability to master its destructive dynamism, to resolve its Faustian dilemmas. By 2012, it was widely assumed that the German Question had been solved, or at least substantially reformulated. After seeming to express the most virulent of European

nationalistic and racist tendencies, the Germans by the early twenty-first century were often counted among the more tolerant and reasonable of Europe's peoples. Germany was even held up as a model of how a country might master a horrific past. The German past had by no means been forgotten, and Germany's prominent position in the Common Market and then the European Union remained a cause of concern – even of bitter resentment in some quarters – but that position by 2012 was based on a number of simple realities: United Germany had the largest population in the Union (c. 82 million; France was in second place at 68 million); Germany enjoyed relatively honest and efficient institutions of state; and Germany's population ranked high among Europeans in per capita productivity (and in such related matters as personal saving and willingness to pay taxes). German influence in Europe was “soft,” not imposed by invasion and enforced by Gestapo terror. It was not easy to portray Chancellor Angela Merkel as arrogant or power hungry.

Neither John F. Kennedy (“I am a Berliner”) nor Nikita Khrushchev (“we will bury you!”) lived to see Berlin reunited and restored, but it is a fair guess that both would have been astonished by what that city had become by 2012. The reunited German capital ranked as one of Europe's most open, vibrant, and attractive cities. In its center, amid many new and impressive architectural features, was the haunting five-acre Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Among the many previously unimaginable developments of the early twenty-first century was the migration of thousands of young secular Israelis to the German capital city, attracted by its economic opportunities and tolerant atmosphere – or discouraged by the comparative lack of those qualities in Jerusalem, under the influence of its rapidly growing ultra-Orthodox population.

“Solving” the German Question brought Europe to the edge of self-destruction. Insofar as history offers lessons, one must wonder whether there might have been some more effective way to respond to Germany's rise than those taken. In retrospect, German ascent seems akin to an inexorable force, an impression much fortified by the fact that, in 2010, after tens of millions of Germans had met violent deaths and vast expanses of German territory had been bombed into ruins, the German nation still had the largest and most productive population in Europe. If Europe's other major powers had somehow reconciled themselves to the inevitability of Germany's rise before 1914, their fortunes would almost certainly have been incomparably better than they turned out to be between 1914 and 1945.

The opposition to Germany's rise was of course an aspect of Europe's competitive dynamism, and it was not clear before 1914 which directions German ambitions (and associated arrogance) might take, but the question of whether Germany might have been “contained” more productively remains tantalizing. Was the effort to prevent Germany's rise worth tens of millions of deaths and the dreadful material destruction during the two world wars? China's rise by the early twenty-first century seems a comparable phenomenon, in the context of global competitiveness. If that rise is also to be considered to some degree inexorable, might a wiser compromise between accommodation and confrontation be reached than had been found with Germany?

No simple answer is of course possible, and, to be sure, if either Germany before 1914 or China after 1945 are considered absolute evils, then compromise with them has to be considered extremely dangerous. Yet it is revealing that President Richard Nixon, whose career was based on a demonizing anti-Communism, is now praised for having accommodated (appeased?) Communist China (in the process, of course, furthering the

American goal of dividing the Communist world). And President Ronald Reagan, another American leader known for uncompromising anti-Communism, also “appeased” – or wisely reached a compromise with? – Mikhail Gorbachev (producing a sigh of relief throughout the world, insofar as the threat of an atomic exchange was lessened).

Americanization, Globalization, and the European Model

Whereas European identity after the end of the Cold War lacked the unity of American identity, Europeans had more in common with Americans, to return to a point made in the Introduction, than they did with other peoples of the world. Especially during the period of the Cold War, Europeans were “Americanized” – happily or unhappily, but in countless ways. How much will that process continue? By the second decade of the twenty-first century, a new international situation of multiple powers and highly complex economic relationships was emerging, promising to challenge the United States’ position as the sole military superpower and as the first industrial power of the world. But Europe’s future role in this new and volatile configuration remained uncertain, in no small part because there was still no consensus about what “Europe” actually was or should become. The European Union by 2012 remained a minor military power in the world, even though it counted a much larger population than the United States (c. 500 million compared to 300 million), and its combined economy out-produced both the United States and China.

Moreover, the vision of a united Europe becoming a major military power did not inspire many Europeans. That non-militarist identity might be held up as one of the more hopeful developments of the early twenty-first century, but it remained doubtful that China, India, Russia, or any number of other rising powers were much inspired by the European model in that particular regard. (Europeans were of course part of NATO, which greatly expanded after 1989 to include most of eastern Europe, but among its members were also the United States, Canada, and Turkey, and thus it did not represent the armed force of the European Union, as such.)

The European model of “freedom,” and its associated parliamentary, liberal-democratic institutions, did continue by 2012 to exercise a broad appeal. But Americans, especially on the Republican right, were prone to far grander claims about their model or their “exceptionalism” than were Europeans (yet another way that “not American!” defines European identity). Similarly, it is obvious that non-European areas have retained their own conceptions of what a modernizing freedom should involve, building upon their own cultures and histories, which in many instances involved freeing themselves from European or American domination of various sorts. What they work out will doubtless differ from what the Europeans or Americans do or have done. Much depends on the extent to which liberal democracies continue to be seen as successful by the rest of the world – and, of course, whether any other models achieve greater success. China’s spectacular economic growth is still too recent and problem-filled to serve as a model to the rest of the world. The Arab Spring is even more recent and filled with problems. Europe and the countries of the world founded by Europeans, if declining relatively, still have quite a head start, and will almost certainly retain prominence among the world’s nations long into the twenty-first century.

The Jewish Question

Europe's Jewish Question was the most tangled of the six questions, its "solution" – a particularly problematic term in this instance – the most tragic and the most enduringly uncertain in significance. In that question's initial and most precise form (that is, whether Europe's Jews should be offered civil equality), it was no longer much of an issue by 2012, since in all European countries Jews had been granted formal civil equality. Moreover, most European Jews had modernized to a significant degree, fulfilling a broader agenda of the Jewish Question, although the modernized nature of most European Jews partly reflected the fact that the least modernized, poorest, and most Orthodox Jews suffered far and away the highest mortality rates from 1939 to 1945. Whatever the extent of these measurable changes, attitudes of Europeans to Jews by the second decade of the twenty-first century could not be considered "normal," nor were feelings about them securely "mastered."

The Europeans' growing concern with mastering their past became intertwined with their peculiar concern with the newly created state of Israel and its many hostile neighbors. From 1948 to 2012, the area of the previous Palestinian Mandate ranked as the world's most enduring trouble spot, experiencing wars every decade (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982) and endemic unrest just short of war in the years between and thereafter. Assassinations, torture of prisoners, terrorism, and other atrocities by both sides characterized the entire period. Well into the twenty-first century, Europeans (and of course Americans) continued to pay more attention to this tiny area than to other areas considerably larger in area and population, in ways that suggested much about Europeans' evolving identity and the many-sided repercussions of the Holocaust.

In retrospect, antisemitism can be termed the most "successful" of Europe's nineteenth-century ideologies. At least, such was the judgment of Harvard professor Ruth Wisse in 2007, in a bitter volume titled *Jews and Power*. However, evaluating antisemitism's success is difficult because the actual goals of antisemites before the Holocaust were anything but precise or unanimous. Similarly, post-Holocaust attitudes to Jews remained an often impenetrable mix. "Eliminationist" hatred had been profoundly discredited, but it is doubtful that most of those commonly considered antisemites before the Holocaust actually desired mass murder. Even the disdain that Jews had faced, in social exclusion or cultural condescension, diminished significantly after 1945, especially in western Europe, though it by no means disappeared entirely. The Holocaust cast a long and dark shadow, but the elusiveness of the issue of attitudes to Jews and Jewish values was provocatively explored in Yuri Slezkine's 2005 prize-winning book *The Jewish Century*, which argued that Jewish values had triumphed in Europe and America, indeed in much of the world – in short, the "worst century" in Jewish history was also one of triumph.

Extreme expressions of this "longest hatred" continued to find articulation in some quarters, but, in their more grotesque varieties – especially those linked to the so-called "blood libel" (Jews allegedly needing non-Jewish blood for their rituals) – they were

found primarily in Arab and Islamic countries (as well as among immigrants to Europe from those countries), ostensibly catalyzed and intensified by hostility to the Jewish state and its Jewish supporters in the rest of the world.

The “new antisemitism” differed from the old in not being racist, at least not insofar as it appealed to the antiracist, universalist, and anti-imperialist left in Europe, whereas on the nationalist right, where antisemitism and xenophobic racism had previously been strongest, a new admiration for Israel and Jews began to emerge. Within Jewish ranks outside Israel, there was a related switch, reflecting the growing chorus of mostly conservative Jews who concluded that the Christian right, even fundamentalists, were now to be considered the Jews’ most reliable allies, whereas leftists were considered the Jews’ most dangerous opponents. From the perspective of the previous 2000 years, during which Jews had viewed Christian doctrine – with its charge of Jewish “Christ-killing” – as implacably hostile, this ranks as another previously unimaginable development.

The shift in Jewish attitudes to Christian conservatives was all the more remarkable given how suddenly it happened. It of course reflected and paralleled rapid changes in most varieties of Christianity regarding their attitudes to Judaism and, especially, the Jewish state. Those changed attitudes were related to a tacit recognition by many Christian leaders that Christianity bore at least some responsibility for the Holocaust. The changing attitudes of Christian conservatives to Israel could further be explained by shifts inside Israel itself. In the early years of the Jewish state, the country was ruled by the socialist left, its society was strongly egalitarian, and the memory of the Nazi persecution was still fresh. For such reasons, Israel was generally supported by the left in Europe, whereas the right, both moderate and extreme, was distinctly more skeptical about the new Jewish state. As the ruling parties in Israel shifted to the right and Israeli society became much less egalitarian, Israel was more often criticized by the left in both Europe and America, whereas those on the political right came to recognize their kinship with the Israeli right wing.

The New Enemy: Islam

Perhaps the most important aspect of these changing attitudes was the emergence of a new Enemy, termed “Islamism” in some quarters, and a new “war,” in which Israel and Jewish conservatives were perceived as allies of Western civilization against Islamic fanatics – and in which leftists were compared by the right to the “appeasers” of the 1930s. This emerging vision of a new Enemy was another basic difference in the zeitgeist of Europeans (and, even more, of Americans) in the early twenty-first century. Insofar as one can speak of new “questions” and new ideologies replacing the old, they had much to do with that new Enemy. However, the remarkable proliferation of ideologies in Europe in the early nineteenth century had only weak parallels in the early twenty-first. The public rhetoric of the early twenty-first century largely abandoned the formulation of “questions” – and even more the associated confidence about their being soluble. And, as far as the leftist mystique was concerned, the thrill was gone.

Environmentalism under Capitalism and Communism

One important new ism, environmentalism, had already made an appearance in the decades immediately after World War II. Some observers predicted that it would grow into a powerful international movement, but those predictions proved too confident, or at least premature. Concern about the environment certainly became a prominent issue, but environmentalism seemed unable to tap emotions, mobilize mass support, and work out coherent programs of action to the extent that earlier isms had. "Green" movements and associated political parties did arise in many countries, especially in Germany and northern Europe, but by the early twenty-first century they had not achieved a majority status or national rule in any major country. There were some notable successes (the Rhine, for example, was converted from a near cesspool in the 1950s to a river again alive with fish), but environmental issues tended to divide previous allies (workers and leftist intellectuals, for example, tended to be on opposite sides) and push together, uncomfortably, previous enemies, most notably social conservatives and progressive activists.

Environmentalism overlapped the older Social Question, insofar as there had been objections in the early nineteenth century to the environmental and aesthetic price paid for industrialization – the noisy railroad engines violating the tranquil countryside, the "satanic mills" that spawned ugly, unhealthy slums. Again, proposed remedies to such evils tended to be divisive rather than gain overwhelming support. Even when problems were effectively addressed, it happened slowly and in ways that often failed to prevent permanent damage to the environment.

In power, Communism failed far more amply than capitalism in remedying environmental damage, which often extended beyond provincial or national borders. The internationalism of Communism was ultimately exposed as bogus in this, as so many other, ways. The disaster at Chernobyl in 1986 made the point of environmental interdependence with stunning immediacy. By the early twenty-first century, global warming promised to endanger the entire planet in even more catastrophic ways than the use of atomic energy, but mobilizing effective measures to counteract it has so far proved to be difficult and divisive.

It has been plausibly argued that after 1945 fear of an atomic exchange prevented a third world war. A comparable rationality in regard to mounting environmental threats may ultimately unite Europeans, Americans, Chinese, and the rest of the world around preventative measures, but it would take even more optimism about the future than existed in Victorian times to believe that such a consensus will emerge soon, quite aside from the issue of whether the leading nations of the planet have adequate technical know-how to take effective preventative measures.

The argument for strong states and strong international organizations is much enhanced by environmental considerations, but what has been termed "globalism" (which might be considered another major new ism, still quite sprawling in connotations) suggests a similar point: It is not in the interest of the nations of the world to see any large economies go under, especially not suddenly. But, again, it would require much faith in human rationality to conclude that nations will finally act in ways that prevent destructive economic competition. It will be remembered that,

before 1914, a number of observers confidently declared that general war would not occur because of the economic interdependence of the major powers.

The Demographic Question and European Xenophobia

Population growth, or the “demographic question,” obviously overlaps environmental issues. In the nineteenth century, many European countries exported large parts of their population to other European countries but most extensively to the Americas. Demographic pressures were thus alleviated in some European countries but exaggerated in others. In retrospect, it appears that internal movement of European peoples, for all the complex difficulties associated with it, presented less daunting challenges than immigration from non-western areas after 1945. French republican ideology was perhaps best prepared to accept non-European citizens, and France received a large number of them by the end of the century, adding up to around 12 per cent of the population; countries such as Denmark, Holland, and Norway, although known as the most tolerant in Europe, before 1945 had counted highly homogeneous populations. Accepting and integrating large numbers of non-whites and non-Christians, or those whose cultures were profoundly different from those of northern Europe, presented challenges that were bound to have toxic repercussions. Even the Irish and Italians, themselves the butt of racist hostility from other Europeans in the nineteenth century, proved susceptible to crudely expressed xenophobia as their cities began to fill with “alien” immigrants. And the French, for all their universalist traditions, have not achieved anything like a satisfactory assimilation of their non-European populations.

To note this rise in European xenophobia is not to suggest that the immigrants posed no serious problems, nor is it to ignore the evidence that immigrants were often beneficial and that many did integrate successfully, but the record in most European countries by the second decade of the twenty-first century was not reassuring. Even in the United States, long accustomed to accepting immigrants and to praising “immigrant gifts,” resentment was rising against the largely non-European immigrants, especially the millions of illegal ones that were flooding the country from Latin America but also other parts of the world.

Environmental threats, demographic decline, and non-European immigration emerged as particularly worrisome twenty-first-century challenges for Europe. Still, by 2012 the threat to the environment appeared considerably more ominous in the 1.3-billion-strong China than in Europe (and scarcely less so in India, predicted to pass China in population by 2020). Most areas of the world faced grave environmental threats, including of course, the United States, the long-standing major contributor to most varieties of environmental pollution and in most areas distinctly behind Europe in taking remedial action. Demographic issues outside Europe were also alarming, if different in particulars. China’s “one-child” policy, designed to limit the growth of its population, seemed to have especially dire long-range implications, since it resulted in a generation with many more males than females. Immigration, too, was a major global issue. The threat of mass immigration concerned Europe more than most because so many non-Europeans wanted to gain entry into Europe. There were not comparable

millions desperately clamoring to get into China or India, let alone the countries of Africa, Latin America, or almost any nation with a predominantly Islamic population. Aside from the obvious economic motivations for immigrants to Europe, European traditions of tolerance and the rule of law played an important role; European xenophobia, however repellent, was generally less violent and lawless than in other areas of the world.

The Sovereign Debt Crisis: The Dilemmas of the European Union

By late 2011 and early 2012, the European Union faced what some considered Europe's most alarming economic predicament since 1945, in the so-called sovereign debt crisis, affecting mostly the seventeen nations that had accepted the euro. Arcane in its details, that predicament in its deeper nature reflected the issues discussed above – that is, the lack of a European identity that was stronger than existing nationalist identities. By 2012 the European Union had recognized twenty-three official languages, and there were an even greater number of regional and national identities, many stubbornly resistant to either giving the technocrats in Brussels more power or accepting Germany's dominant role in the Union.

The opening pages of this volume referred to the “fierce dynamism of European civilization.” In one form or another, every chapter has been concerned with it, or with what the Preface also termed “the demons of the extreme left and right.” No matter how the sovereign debt crisis works out, a united states of Europe closely resembling the United States of America in its identity remains far in the future, if ever to be achieved.

However, to conclude that European unification has “failed” goes much too far. Churchill once quipped that liberal democracy was the worst possible form of government – except for all the others. Much the same might be said of Europe in comparison to other areas of the globe. Whatever its defects, however ominous its demographic realities, Europe will likely remain for some time one of the more prosperous and otherwise attractive areas of the planet, in no small part because Europeans have recognized those defects and have tried to come to grips with or “master” their history, in both its triumphs and its tragedies.

Further Reading

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, historians tend to be cautious in evaluating the long-range meaning of current events, and it does seem that, the closer they get to the present, the more ephemeral are many of the works published on the European scene. In that regard, the titles of some books that appeared a decade or so ago are revealing in their relatively optimistic view of Europe's future, compared to the often pessimistic books that have appeared more recently. For example, Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* (2004) and T.R. Reid, *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy* (2004). These titles can be compared to Walter Laqueur's despairing

After the Fall: The End of the European Dream and the Decline of a Continent (2012) and to the gloomy perspectives of Christopher Caldwell's *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West* (2010).

As observed in the Preface, the many books and articles of Timothy Garton Ash have aged better than most, among them *The Free World: Europe, America, and the Surprising Future of the West* (2005) and *Facts Are Subversive: Political Writings on a Decade without a Name* (2011).

Ruth Franklin's *A Thousand Darknenses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (2011) is not a work of history but rather of literary criticism, but it explores in a well-informed and provocative manner many issues that are relevant to historical conceptualizations.

Index

This volume makes reference to terms and proper names from well over twenty languages. No reader can be expected to have an adequate sense of how all of them are pronounced, but “correct” (native) pronunciation is an impossible goal, since most of these languages have sounds that do not exist in English, and many give different values to letters of the alphabet than English does – and of course many use different alphabets. The pronunciation guides in the following pages try to approximate the native pronunciation of the language involved, but also recognize that in many cases anglicized pronunciations, even when remote from native pronunciation, have become widely used and thus eventually “correct.”

Many of the less familiar foreign terms and names, however, reside in a linguistic no-man’s-land, leaving most readers clueless about how to pronounce them. The pronunciation guides here try to offer intuitive renderings, for English-speaking readers innocent of other languages. The arcane symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet are little help for most. However, a few necessary conventions are used in this index: Stressed syllables are in capital letters; *kh* represents guttural h; *ŋ* is used for nasalized sounds, as in French and Polish; and *ew* represents French u or German ü.

Pronunciation guides are not provided where native pronunciation is similar to intuitive English. Guides are given only for surnames, except when first names seem particularly odd or puzzling (Lech, Wojciech).

Birth and death dates of major figures are included in parentheses after names, along with dates of reign (r.) or office, where appropriate.

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